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MOSES:

HIS LIFE AND TIMES.

BY

GEORGE RAWLINSON, M.A.

CAMDEN PROFESSOR OF ANCIENT HISTORY IN THE UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD, AND CORRESPONDING MEMBER OF THE ROYAL ACADEMY OF TURIN; AUTHOR OF "THE FIVE GREAT MONARCHIES OF THE ANCIENT EASTERN WORLD," ETC. ETC.

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PREFACE.

THE materials for a life of Moses are found chiefly in the four later Books of the Pentateuch. The New Testament also contributes some valuable notices, especially Acts vii. and Hebrews xi. Next to them in value, but next at an interval that is scarcely measurable, come the accounts given by Josephus and Philo. Moses is the hero of Josephus's Second, Third, and Fourth Books, which present to us the circumstances of his life with a considerable amount of detail, but do not add very much to the scriptural narrative, except at the two extremes of Moses' career, his early years and his decease. Different estimates may be formed of the degree of credit to be attached to these portions of Josephus's history, and it requires, beyond a doubt, much critical acumen to deal with them properly, neither accepting nor rejecting them *en bloc*. The same may be said of the notices to be found in the writings of Philo. Philo has left us a work entitled, "The Life of Moses" (Περὶ Βίου Μωσέως), which contains interesting accounts of his education and personal appearance; and in several of his other treatises he gives estimates of Moses' character and abilities. A passage of Artapanus, preserved by Eusebius, is entitled to consideration. Many legends have clustered round the name of Moses, some Jewish, others Mahometan; but these are almost wholly worthless, and throughout the following pages, excepting in a single instance, no notice has been taken of them. The writer's strong conviction has been that it is from Scripture, almost entirely, if not entirely, that we must learn the facts of Moses' life, and deduce our estimate of his character. He believes that in the four later Books of the Pentateuch we have an actual, though not an intentional, autobiography. Without going the length of saying that the whole of Deuteronomy is the composition of Moses, he regards it as a faithful report of discourses held by Moses during the later months of his life, collected after his

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death by Joshua or Eleazar into a volume. And he has not the slightest doubt that Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers, were written, almost as we have them, by Moses himself. Moses is thus portrayed to us by his own hand in these three Books, and in Deuteronomy by the hand of a contemporary; and the truth concerning him is best arrived at by a close scrutiny of the scriptural narrative.

Materials for a description of the "times" of Moses exist now in enormous quantities through the interpretation of the hieroglyphic inscriptions, and of the other native Egyptian documents. They are contained in the works of Lepsius, Wilkinson, Rosellini, Mariette, Brugsch, Birch, Chabas, Stuart Poole, and others. The difficulty here has been that of selection. In a work limited to two hundred pages, the author found it necessary to contract within a painfully narrow space his notices of the contemporary history of the manners, customs, and religion of Egypt; while of the grand buildings executed by the Egyptian monarchs, amongst which Moses was brought up, he could only allow himself the briefest and most general description. Similarly, with respect to Moses' life in the wilderness, and to the geographical problems involved in the wanderings, he found it impossible within the limits assigned him to enter into details, or to attempt more than some general portraiture of the Sinaitic region, and the life of its ancient inhabitants. For this portion of his essay he is largely indebted to the labours of Stanley, Tristram, Robinson, Trumbull, Porter, and the travellers whose works have been published under the auspices of the Palestine Exploration Fund. Recent commentaries, as the "Speaker's," the "Pulpit Commentary," and that sanctioned by the Bishop of Gloucester and Bristol, have also been laid under contribution, and have afforded valuable aid. Among general histories of the time, he has derived the greatest assistance from the late Dean Stanley's "History of the Jewish Church," which, though not faultless, is a work of sterling merit. Ewald's History seems to him far inferior; and the other accounts given of Moses in Cyclopædias and Biblical Dictionaries add nothing of any value to the researches and reflections of the two above-mentioned writers.

OXFORD, G. R.

February 27, 1887.

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CHAPTER I.

ISRAEL IN EGYPT.

Jacob's descent into Egypt: Joseph's position: Circumstances of Egypt at the time—Joseph's Pharaoh, Apepi—Israel after Joseph's death—Commencement of the severe oppression; its nature—Edict issued to destroy all the male infants.

THE circumstances of the birth and early life of Moses, and his position in Egypt, cannot be set forth intelligibly without some previous consideration of the historical antecedents whereby those circumstances were brought about, and that position rendered possible. The historical antecedents were strange and abnormal. Three hundred and fifty years before Moses was born, there had arrived in Egypt a band of immigrants from Palestine, amounting to several hundreds, or perhaps to some thousands, who had been permitted to become permanent settlers. Their advent was not unexpected. The great minister of a great Egyptian king had received instructions from the monarch to invite into Egypt his father, his eleven brothers, and their households (Gen. xlv. 17, 18). He had done so, and they had taken advantage of the invitation, and traversed the desert which divides Palestine from Egypt in a huge caravan, bringing with them their flocks and their herds, their asses, their tents and their tent-furniture, their women and their children, their bond-slaves, and "all that they had." It is not an unreasonable calculation of Dean Payne Smith's, that they numbered altogether three thousand souls.[1] The "household" (*taph*), according to the Hebrew idea, included

[1] "Bampton Lectures," p. 89.

not merely wife and children, but men-servants and maid-servants, dependents and retainers, even hirelings who might quit the service and go elsewhere when it pleased them. The household of Abraham, when he went in pursuit of Chedor-laomer, comprised three hundred and eighteen adult males, capable of bearing arms, who had all been "born in his house" (Gen. xiv. 14). His *taph* must altogether have exceeded twelve hundred persons. Jacob's is not likely to have been less; and if we allow his eleven sons, who were all grown up and had families, an average of two hundred a-piece, their *taphs* would have amounted to two thousand two hundred, giving a total for the immigrants of three thousand four hundred. That so large a body should be favourably received need not excite surprise. Egypt was always open to refugees from foreign lands, and the circumstances of the time were such as secured this particular body of immigrants a warm welcome.

The chief of these circumstances was their kinsman's, Joseph's, position. Joseph had been recognized by the Pharaoh of the time as "a man in whom the Spirit of God was" (Gen. xli. 38)—a man "discreet and wise" above all others (verse 39). He had not only been granted the highest honours that the Egyptian monarchs ever allowed to a subject, but he had been made actual ruler of the whole land under the king. He had employed his extraordinary powers wisely and well, had made provision for carrying Egypt safely through a period of extreme difficulty, and had greatly enriched the royal treasury by his arrangements. There was scarcely any favour within reasonable bounds that the successful minister could ask which the king was likely to refuse to him. He "was a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house, and a ruler throughout all the land of Egypt" (Gen. xlv. 8). Moreover, it is perhaps not too much to say, that personal intercourse with his minister had produced a real feeling of friendliness and attachment between the two, and had disposed the Pharaoh to make spontaneous efforts to afford gratification to his loved and trusted adviser. In the particular case of which we are speaking, Joseph was not actually obliged to prefer any petition. He expressed to his brethren his desires respecting them, and his words having been reported to the Court, the Pharaoh came forward voluntarily, without being asked, and proposed to his minister that he should send his brethren to fetch their father and their households, adding of

his own account the suggestion, that they should be supplied with wheeled vehicles for the conveyance of their wives and "little ones" (Gen. xlv. 19). So anxious was he to please his minister and anticipate his wishes.

The condition of Egypt was also such that a body of immigrants from the quarter from which the family of Jacob came could not be otherwise than welcome. Egypt had been conquered, some centuries before the time of Joseph, by a nomadic race from Asia, of pastoral habits. The conquest had been accompanied with extreme cruelty and violence; wherever the nomads triumphed, the males of full age had been massacred, the women and children reduced to slavery, the cities burnt, the temples demolished, the images of the gods thrown to the ground. An oppressive and tyrannical rule had been established. The old Egyptians, the native African race, were bowed down beneath the yoke of unsympathetic aliens. Although by degrees the manners of the conquerors became softened, and, as so often happens, the rude invaders conformed themselves more and more, in language, habits, and methods of thought, to the pattern set them by their more civilized subjects, yet, so far as feelings and sentiments were concerned, a wide gulf still separated the two. Like the Aryan Persians under the rule of the Parthians, like the native Chinese under the Mantchu Tartars, the Egyptians groaned and repined in secret, and persistently nurtured the hope of one day re-asserting their independence. Nor were their foreign masters unaware of these feelings. They knew themselves to be detested; they were conscious of the volcano under their feet; they lived in expectation of an outbreak, and were always engaged in making preparations against it. In this condition of affairs, each band of immigrants from Asia, especially if of nomadic habits, was regarded as an accession of strength, and was therefore welcomed and treated with favour. Shepherds were "an abomination" to the real native Egyptians. To the Hyksôs kings, who held the dominion of Egypt, shepherds were congenial, and Asiatic shepherds, more or less akin to their own race, were viewed as especially trustworthy and reliable. Hence the warmth of Pharaoh's welcome. When Joseph introduced his brethren to the monarch, and, in answer to the question, "What is your occupation?" they replied—"Thy servants are shepherds, both we and our fathers, thy servants'

trade has been about cattle from our youth even until now—for to sojourn in the land we are come; for thy servants have no pasture for their flocks; now therefore, we pray thee, let thy servants dwell in the land of Goshen," the Pharaoh's words to Joseph were—"Thy father and thy brethren are come unto thee; the land of Egypt is before thee; *in the best of the land* make thy father and thy brethren to dwell; in the land of Goshen let them dwell; and if thou knowest any men of activity amongst them, then *make them rulers over my cattle*" (Gen. xlvii. 5, 6).

The particular king, moreover, who at the time of Jacob's entrance into Egypt occupied the throne, had reasons for being especially drawn towards the nomadic tribe, which under their sheikh, Jacob, solicited his favour. George the Syncellus tells us, that there was a universal consensus of historians with respect to the fact, that the monarch who raised Joseph to power was the Shepherd King, Apepi. He does not say, as some have made him say,[1] that the synchronism was generally agreed upon by the *ecclesiastical* historians; but that it was "agreed upon by all"[2]—*i.e.*, by all the historians with whose works he was acquainted. Among these were certainly Abydenus, Apollodorus, Eratosthenes, Alexander Polyhistor, the friend of Sulla, Zosimus of Panopolis, Africanus, Annianus, and Panodorus, possibly also many others, some Christian, some heathen, some writers on Church subjects, some authors of purely secular histories. The tradition, thus strongly supported, receives confirmation from Egyptian chronology, which places an interval of four hundred years between the time of Apepi and a late year in the reign of the second Ramesses,[3] while Hebrew chronology places an interval of four hundred and thirty years between Jacob's entrance into Egypt and the Exodus, which belongs to the reign of Rameses the Second's son.

But if Apepi was the king to whom Joseph owed his elevation, there would have been in his religion a fresh bond between him and his minister, and a fresh ground for his sympathizing warmly with the new immigrants. Apepi was a monotheist. One peculiarity of the Hyksôs period, belonging especially to

[1] Bunsen, "Egypt's Place in Universal History," vol. ii. p. 438.
[2] "Chronographia," p. 62, B; p. 69, C.
[3] "Records of the Past," vol. iv. p. 36.

its later portion, is to be found in the religious views professed, proclaimed, and enjoined upon subject princes. Apepi, according to the MS. known as 'the First Sallier Papyrus,' made a great movement in Lower Egypt in favour of monotheism. Whereas previously the Shepherd Kings had allowed among their subjects, if they had not even practised themselves, the worship of a multitude of gods, Apepi 'took to himself' a single god for lord, refusing to serve any other god in the whole land. According to the Egyptian writer of the MS., the name under which he worshipped his god was Sutech; and some writers have supposed that he chose this god out of the existing Egyptian Pantheon, because he was the god of the North, where his own dominion lay. But Sutech, though undoubtedly he had a place in the Egyptian Pantheon from very ancient times, seems to have been essentially an Asiatic god, the special deity of the Hittite nation, with which there is reason to believe that the Shepherd Kings were closely connected. Apepi, moved by a monotheistic impulse, selected Sutech, we should suppose, rather out of his own gods than out of the Egyptian deities, and determined that, whatever had been the case previously, henceforth he would renounce polytheism, and worship one only lord and god, the god long known to his nation, and to his own ancestors, under the name above mentioned. Apepi's monotheism was a bond of union between him and the family of Joseph, and may well have been among the grounds of the especial favour which he accorded to them.

Apepi placed the Israelites "in the *best* of the land—in the land of Goshen"—probably the alluvial district on the eastern side of the Pelusiac branch of the Nile, which verged upon the desert, and was a good pasturage country, where the royal cattle were pastured (Gen. xlvii. 6). At first the Israelites would occupy but a small portion of the district; but as they began to "multiply exceedingly" (Gen. xlvii. 27), they must have spread further and further to the west and south, favoured still by Apepi, and even after his death protected by the prestige of Joseph, whose prudent and successful administration of the country could not easily have been forgotten, and who, if deposed by Apepi's successor, must still have been a power and an influence in the country. The weight and consideration that attached to Joseph until his death, and even afterwards, is

indicated in the Scriptural narrative by the contrast drawn between the earlier and the later period of the Egyptian sojourn, after a "king arose, which knew not Joseph."

But the change in the condition and treatment of the Israelites by the rulers of the country was probably very slow and gradual. According to the Hebrew text of Exod. xii. 40, 41, a space of nearly four centuries and a half intervened between the entrance of the children of Israel into Egypt and their exodus under the leadership of Moses; and, although the real duration of the period is disputed,[1] the balance of probability is in favour of this long term rather than of a shorter one. The growth of a tribe, numbering even three thousand persons, into a nation of above two millions, abnormal and remarkable if it took place within a period of four hundred and thirty years, would be still more strange and astonishing if the space of time were seriously curtailed. The ten generations between Jacob and Joshua (1 Chron. vii. 22–27), who was a grown man at the time of the Exodus, require a term of four centuries rather than one of two. Egyptian chronology also favours the longer period. Adopting it, we must divide the Egyptian sojourn into three portions—one of about seventy years, during which the Israelites enjoyed the powerful protection of Joseph; a second of about two hundred and sixty years, during which they were "afflicted," but did not suffer any very severe oppression; and a third of about a century, throughout which their "lives were made bitter, and all their service, wherein the Egyptians made them serve, was with rigour" (Exod. i. 14).

The chief event of the first period must have been the death of Apepi, or his expulsion from Egypt by the great founder of the eighteenth dynasty, Aahmes. Apepi, in his later years, alarmed at the growing power of Thebes under the Ra-Sekenens, picked a quarrel with the reigning Theban monarch, Taa-ken, and engaged in a war with the native Egyptians of the Upper Country, in which he ultimately suffered complete defeat. He had to retire upon his frontier city, Auaris, where he was attacked by Taa-ken's successor, Aahmes, who after a time took the city, and drove out the entire body of the invaders (or, rather, of their descendants), who had made themselves masters of Egypt under Saites. It would be interesting to know whether the Israelites were called upon to take part in this war, and, if

[1] See Mr. Deane's "Abraham: His Life and Times," pp. 81–84.

so, what response they made to the call; but unluckily history is silent on these points, and we are left to conjecture. One thing alone is evident. They did not throw in their lot with the Hyksôs. Engaged under them in the quiet pursuits of pasturing cattle, and perhaps to some extent of agriculture, they were probably unwilling to take up arms, and perhaps were not even called upon to do so. Hence, they did not suffer expulsion. The victorious party under Aahmes left the harmless shepherds in possession of their rich pasturages, and Goshen continued to be inhabited by the descendants of Jacob. As time went on and they multiplied, Goshen must have become more and more thickly peopled; but the land was rich, the shepherds prospered, and in any times of difficulty they had a great and powerful protector in Joseph.

The death of Joseph, which ushered in the second period, must have at once sensibly affected the position of the descendants of Jacob. They had no longer an advocate among the great of the land, to look after their interests, intervene on their behalf when needful, and call the attention of those in power to any grievance of which they might have to complain. Joseph's position must have been high, even to the end of his life, as we see by the long continuance of his memory (Exod. i. 8). But his position was not inherited by either of his sons, or by any descendant, though Ephraim and Manasseh, as grandsons of a High Priest of On, must certainly have been persons of some consideration, even after their father's decease. The old Egyptian prejudice against shepherds would cause the Israelites to be looked down upon and shunned, while their foreign descent and the fact that they had been the *protégés* of the Hyksôs would also tend to lower them in the public esteem. It was probably not very long after Joseph's death that the "affliction," or ill-usage, commenced which had been foretold to Abraham (Gen. xv. 13). The Israelites began to be treated by their rulers and by the upper classes of the Egyptians much as the *fellahin* of the present day are treated by their Turkish masters. They were despised, regarded as of small account, tyrannized over, struck upon occasions. As they grew in numbers Goshen became too small for them, and they were compelled to take up their abode in the great towns, or to emigrate into the neighbouring districts, where they had to work as common labourers on the land of others, or else to occupy themselves in handi-

crafts. Egypt was very flourishing at the time, and they would have had little difficulty in finding employment; but the passage from the independent nomadic life to a settled abode in towns, or even to a hired service in a country district, is always grievous to those who have enjoyed the freedom of the pastoral state, and is viewed as a degradation. The Israelites did not probably suffer from the wars of the period, for a foreign subject race would not be pressed into the Egyptian service, and the dynasty was so successful in its military expeditions that Egypt had never in its turn to suffer invasion; so that, on the whole, the "affliction" was, thus far, perhaps more sentimental than physical, affecting minds rather than bodies, and consisting more in diminished consideration than in any very tangible grievances, except occasionally, when the poorer and weaker members of the race came into contact with Egyptian aristocrats.

In one respect the time was marked by an extraordinary degree of prosperity. It was during the two hundred and sixty years of the second period that "the children of Israel were fruitful and increased abundantly, and multiplied, and waxed exceeding mighty; and the land was filled with them" (Exod. i. 7). The population increased from twenty thousand to (probably) above a million, and became thus so numerous as to alarm the native Egyptians, who did not perhaps themselves number more than six or seven millions. Rapid increase of numbers is, however, an advantage only under certain circumstances—*i.e.*, when a tribe or a people has a large unoccupied territory, or when commerce or manufactures offer practically unlimited employment to any multitude of applicants. But the circumstances of Egypt were not such as to afford these facilities; and the result must have been a difficulty in obtaining subsistence on the part of the Israelites, unless they consented to a low wage or to occupations which were generally distasteful. Towards the close of the second period we may be tolerably sure that a large number of them were forced to submit to both these inconveniences; that the lowest kinds of employments were eagerly accepted by thousands of Hebrews who found the struggle for existence a hard fight, and that these persons worked at wages which were barely sufficient to keep the wolf from their doors.

The third period now arrived, "A king arose up over Egypt who knew not Joseph" (Exod. i. 8). The memory of benefits received, however great, dies out after a time. Within fourteen

years of Salamis the Athenians banished Themistocles; within seventeen years of Waterloo the Duke of Wellington was obliged to protect the windows of Apsley House from the attacks of the London mob by cast-iron shutters. We ought perhaps rather to admire the fidelity of the Egyptians to the memory of a former benefactor, and the tenacity of their attachments, than blame them for fickleness, or hold them up to opprobrium for ingratitude. After two hundred and sixty years they may be pardoned if they had forgotten. The king intended, who is called "a new king," was probably Seti I., the founder, or quasi-founder, of a dynasty—one wholly unconnected with the preceding occupants of the throne, who, if he had heard of Joseph at all, had heard of him only as "the shadow of a mighty name"—a great statesman of the past, perhaps a real "hero," perhaps a myth—and who failed to realize it as a fact, that either the Egypt of his time, or he himself individually, was in any way indebted to so remote and shadowy a personage. The king looked to the condition of Egypt with the dry, hard gaze of shrewd, practical common sense, and saw in the position of things at his accession great cause for anxiety. Egypt was threatened by a formidable enemy upon her north-eastern frontier. Three centuries from the death of Apepi brings us in Egyptian history to the close of Manetho's eighteenth dynasty, and the accession of his nineteenth, a critical period in the Egyptian annals, and one of much interest. Egypt had at this time lost all those Asiatic possessions which had been gained under the earlier kings of the eighteenth dynasty—Thothmes I., Thothmes III., and Amen-hotep II., and had retired within her own natural borders. South-western Asia had fallen under the dominion of the Khita or Hittites, who had gradually extended their dominion from the Cappadocian highlands to the low regions of Philistia and Western Arabia. In alliance with the other Canaanite nations, with the Philistines, and even with the Arabs (Shasu), the Hittites threatened an invasion of Egypt, which, it was felt, might have the most disastrous consequences. What, if this contingency actually occurred, would be the part taken by the Israelites? Might it not be that they would "join themselves to Egypt's enemies, and fight against the Egyptians" (Exod. i. 10), and so either help to bring them under subjection to the Hittites, or else "get themselves up out of the land"? The Israelites occupied the portion of Egypt which the Hittites

would first enter; if they joined the enemy they would deliver into his hands a large tract of most valuable territory, and put him in a position from which he would threaten the most important of the Egyptian cities—Tanis, Heliopolis, Bubastis, Memphis. Reflecting upon this, the Pharaoh of the time—Seti I., according to our view—deemed it incumbent on him to take such measures as should seriously weaken and depress his Israelite subjects, crush their aspirations, destroy their physical vigour, and by degrees diminish their numbers.

The first step was to deprive them of their freedom. The sovereign of Egypt, an irresponsible despot, absolute master of the lives and liberties of all his subjects, had full power to reduce at any time any individual among them, or any class of them, to the slave condition. The pyramid builders had done this on a large scale in the days of old. The Pharaoh, who at the time of which we are speaking occupied the throne, made public slaves of the Israelites. Without perhaps any proclamation of their change of status, he practically established it by sending his agents into the districts which they inhabited, and impressing into his service as forced labourers all the males of full age, who were not incapacitated by infirmity or sickness. The main employment which he assigned to them was in connection with his buildings. He was a builder of cities, especially of store-cities, or magazine-cities, and needed for their construction a constant supply of hundreds of thousands of bricks. All the outer enclosures of cities, of temples, and of tombs, all the houses, all the walls of magazines and of public buildings generally, except temples and palaces, were built of this material; even the mounds upon which cities were ordinarily emplaced, to raise them above the level of the inundation, were of the same substance. The Israelites were taken from their free trade of shepherds, lazily tending their flocks and herds in the open pastures of Goshen, to the close confinement of the brick-field, where, under taskmasters who exacted from them a certain fixed quantity of work, they dug the stiff clay, mixed and kneaded it with hands or feet, shaped it carefully into the proper form by means of a mould, and at the end of the day produced their "tale of bricks" before the taskmaster. The labour was heavy and incessant, carried on under a hot sun, continued from morning to night, and performed under fear of the rod, which was at once freely applied to the back and shoulders of any one

who was thought to be insufficiently exerting himself. Another task to which they were set was "service in the field" (Exod. i. 14), probably "such as we still see along the banks of the Nile, where the peasants, naked, under the burning sun, work through the day like pieces of machinery in drawing up the buckets of water from the level of the river for the irrigation of the fields above."[1] The service was made purposely harder than it need have been, since the object was to break down the people morally and physically, to exhaust their vital power by over-work, and so to shorten their lives. "The Egyptians made the children of Israel to serve with rigour; and they made their lives bitter with hard bondage, in mortar, and in brick, and in all manner of service in the field: all their service wherein they made them serve, was with rigour" (Exod. i. 13, 14).

It was hoped that this over-work, this constant drudgery of toil, this deep "affliction," aggravated as it was by continual blows from the taskmasters, would have the effect, at any rate, of stopping any further increase in the numbers of the people, even if it failed to produce an actual reduction of their numbers. And this would have been the natural result, had Divine Providence not interfered, but allowed the ordinary laws which govern the ebb and flow of a population to have free course and work themselves out unchecked. But such was not the Divine will. God, who had promised Abraham that his seed should increase and multiply until it became as "the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the seashore" (Gen. xxii. 17) for multitude, did not submit to have his purpose baffled by the machinations of human adversaries. By suspending the operation of the laws, or by counteracting it, he brought it to pass that the rate of increase which had hitherto prevailed in the Hebrew population of Egypt should rise rather than fall under the changed circumstances: "The more the Egyptians afflicted them, *the more they multiplied and grew;* and the Egyptians were grieved because of the people of Israel" (Exod. i. 12).

A despotic monarch does not readily allow his designs to be defeated and set aside. The Pharaoh who had thought to "deal *wisely*" with the Hebrews, and had therefore devised the plan of crushing them and preventing them from multiplying by engaging them in continuous hard labour, finding his craft of no avail, had recourse to violence. Egypt possessed a guild of

[1] Stanley, "Lectures on the Jewish Church," vol. i. p. 85.

midwives, one portion of which was assigned the duty of ministering to the necessities of the Hebrew women in their confinements. Pharaoh issued secret orders to the two chief midwives, and through them to the others, that, when they performed their office, they should take care to destroy all the male children, and only suffer the female children to live. Infanticide was a common practice among many ancient nations, as the Romans, the Spartans, and others, but in Egypt it was accounted a crime; and though the Pharaoh was reckoned a sort of divine being by his subjects, yet it was not felt that he could dispense with the laws of moral obligation. The midwives "feared God" (Exod. i.17) more than they feared the king, and, though professing a willingness to carry out his will, practically disobeyed his orders. The male children were spared by them, with the result that "the people multiplied" more than ever, and "waxed very mighty" (ver. 20). Then, at length, the king left off his attempts to "deal wisely," craftily, and secretly, with the difficult circumstances in which he considered himself to be placed; he openly issued a proclamation to his subjects generally, requiring them to put to death the male Hebrew children by drowning them in the Nile (ver. 22). Perhaps he represented the cruel requirement as given by the command of the Nile-god, who needed to be propitiated by human sacrifices; perhaps he found some other mode of justifying himself. At any rate the order went forth, and was doubtless acted upon, though perhaps not very generally. The Egyptians had no quarrel with their Hebrew neighbours, and would not care to act as executioners; but government officials would be employed to see the king's orders carried out, and no doubt for several years many thousands of innocent lives were sacrificed. Still, however, the king's purpose was not effected. Had the edict been rigorously enforced, the people would have been extinguished before the date of the Exodus. But it had then reached to a total of above two million souls (Exod. xii. 37). Either, therefore, the edict must have been revoked after a while, or it must gradually have sunk into oblivion. In one way or another God's will triumphed over man's, and the people, doomed to extinction by the highest human power which existed on earth at the time, was preserved by God's providence through all the perils which threatened it, to become, according to the promise given to Jacob (Gen. xxxv. 11), "a nation and a company of nations."

CHAPTER II.

BIRTH OF MOSES.

Moses' parents; their position; their place of abode—His sister, Miriam—His elder brother Aaron—Aaron's birth had not needed to be concealed—Concealment of the birth of Moses—Plan to save him when further concealment was impossible—The plan skilfully carried out.

THE father of Moses is first introduced to us as "a man of the house of Levi" (Exod. ii. 1). We are subsequently told that his name was Amram, and that he was of the family of the Kohathites, who were descended from Kohath, Levi's second son (Exod. vi. 16-20). He took to himself a wife of the same tribe, a woman named Jochebed, who was "his father's sister." Such marriages were common among the Egyptians, and, not having been as yet forbidden by any positive enactment, seem to have been regarded as lawful by the Hebrews. The parents of Moses were persons in humble circumstances. No special dignity as yet attached to the Levites among the children of Israel, or to the Kohathites among the Levites; and the circumstances of the Hebrews since the death of Joseph had been such as rapidly to exhaust ancestral wealth, and bring the whole nation down to an almost dead level of uniformity. The writer of the Pentateuch enters into few details; but we gather from his narrative, that Amram's household was a simple and a modest one, where the main duties were discharged by the house-mother and the house-daughter, whose appearance was such that they could, without impropriety, be asked to perform menial service and accept "wages" (Exod. ii. 9).

The abode occupied by the modest household was in or near the capital city of the time, where the Court resided. The capital was situated on the Nile, or on one of its branches, and was most probably Memphis. Memphis occupied nearly the site

on which now stands the great city of Cairo, one of the most salubrious residences and one of the most picturesque cities in the world. It was a lordly and magnificent town. Built, according to the tradition, by the most ancient of all the Egyptian kings, M'na or Menes, on the left or western bank of the river, which washed its eastern wall, and reflected in its waves temple, tower, and palace, tall obelisk, and huge colossus, and frowning gateway, the city of Menes was, as its name implied, "a Good," or "Pleasing Abode," a favourite residence of the monarchs, and, in the earlier years covered by the nineteenth dynasty, the place where the Court was commonly held. Its great pride and glory was the Temple of Phthah. Coeval with the city, founded, that is to say, by Menes, the Temple of Phthah, consisting of a grand central edifice, surrounded by pillared courts, and adorned by colossal statues, by pictured representations of the great deeds of kings, by sphinxes, inscriptions, tablets, perhaps by obelisks, stood up like a great cathedral, in the centre of the lordly town, the work of many kings and of many ages, telling a thrilling tale of bygone history to those who had skill to read the past in its architecture, or in its records. Here was the nucleus of the building, the cell or shrine of Phthah originally set up by Menes; there, towards the north, was the great portal erected by Amenemhat III., or Mœris; in front of the grand entrance were colossi attributed to Usurtasen III., the Greek Sesostris; all around were spread out the white arms of colonaded courts, the work of this or that Pharaoh. In other parts of the town were numerous temples, erected to other deities. On the eastern edge of the city, washed on one side by the river, was the citadel, or "White Castle," as the Greeks in after times called it, a strong fortress, girt with a lofty rampart made of the light yellow limestone which the neighbouring desert furnishes.

Opposite Memphis, towards the west, standing out in clear outline against the pale sky, was its vast and wonderful necropolis. Stretching north and south a distance of nearly twenty miles, but with its populous centre immediately behind Memphis, this strange "City of the Dead" confronted the living city, drawing the eye by the sharp points of its sixty pyramids[1] and especially challenging attention by those huge monuments of kingly vanity, which have never elsewhere been equalled, the works of monarchs anterior to Abraham, which defy time to

[1] Stuart Poole, "Cities of Egypt," p. 26

efface them. The household of Amram dwelt under the shadow of the three Great Pyramids. On the edge of the western horizon, as often as they lifted their eyes towards it, they would see those giant forms, those "artificial mountains," the most impressive monuments that have ever been raised by human hands, stupendous memorials of their builders' egotism, and of the misery of the people by whom they were built.

Before the birth of Moses the family was one comprising four persons only, Amram, the *paterfamilias*, probably well advanced in years; whether handicraftsman, or field labourer, or otherwise employed, we cannot say, but a man at any rate of small account among those among whom his lot was cast; Jochebed, his aunt and wife, the *materfamilias*, tender and loving house-mother; and two children, Miriam the elder, a grown-up girl, some fifteen or sixteen years of age, or perhaps more, and Aaron, a boy, an infant not yet three years old. Miriam, the first of all the Marys of whom history tells, is a soft and pleasing figure in the narrative. Brightly she rises up before us as the "house-angel," the mother's deft and ready help, the father's pride, gifted with precious gifts, as those of music and of song (Exod. xv. 20), yet quiet and domestic, content to keep her gifts hidden, and to do the common work of a common Hebrew household. Aaron was, we must conclude, born before the cruel edict of the reigning Pharaoh had been issued, so that his birth had not needed to be concealed; his life had been spared by the God-fearing midwives; or his mother had been so strong and healthful that in the hour of her travail she had not required their care (Exod. i. 19). As the eldest son of the house he would have been its embryo priest, and would have been set apart, from the womb probably, with some form of consecration. He would also have been especially welcome, as the first man-child always was in a Hebrew household, as securing the continuance of the family in the male line, or, at any rate, giving a reasonable prospect of such continuance. We are told nothing of his appearance, but may presume that he too was, like his brother, "a goodly child" (Exod. ii. 2), of a *physique* that fitted him for the grand and lofty position which he afterwards occupied. He was as yet, however, but a boy, a happy, careless boy of three years' old, ignorant of the weight of responsibility that was about one day to fall upon him, the delight of the house probably, causing general cheerfulness by his chatter and his laughter.

this, as on most other Hebrew households, the intelligence of the Pharaoh's barbarous edict fell like a blast of chill air. Jochebed was still of age to bear children, and she either knew when the edict was issued, or became aware soon afterwards, that she was once more about to give birth to a child. Would it be a male child, or a female one? In the former case, how could she bear to have the tender clinging babe torn from her loving arms and breast, carried off by rude hands out of her sight, to be plunged in the cold stream, that flowed so near, and suffocated by the cruel waves, or devoured by the huge jaws of crocodiles? How could she bear to have her home thus desecrated, her mother's heart thus rent with grief, her soul tortured and agonized? She felt that she could not bear it. But what resource was there? Could it be hoped that a mother's tears and prayers would move the heart of a stern and fierce king, and that, if she thrust herself into his presence, or otherwise obtained an interview, she would prevail on him to relent and spare one at any rate of the doomed victims? Or could she look to make an impression on the king's myrmidons, and, when they came to snatch her child from her embrace, induce them to refrain, and let her keep him? Such thoughts must often have passed through the mind of Jochebed, as she pondered during all the long weary months on the fate of the child that she carried in her womb; and they must have become aggravated and intensified to an inexpressible degree, when the time came for her confinement, and she was delivered of a male child, and looking on him saw that he was a "goodly infant." Mothers have been known to favour especially the least beautiful among their offspring: but when was there one who could look upon her new-born babe, if it possessed the gift of a rare beauty, without a thrill of delight and a more than ordinary affection? So it was with Jochebed. She might perhaps have yielded up her child to the hard fate commanded by the king, had he been an infant of the common stamp, with nothing attractive about him save his innocence and his helplessness; but he was "goodly" (Exod. ii. 2), "proper" (Heb. xi. 23), "exceeding fair" (Acts vii. 20), of a beauty that seemed almost divine, and hence, when she looked upon him, she felt nerved to defy the monarch and his myrmidons, and resolved to preserve her darling in despite of them. The first steps were comparatively easy to accomplish. For three months the small intruder might be hid—his father's

house would shelter him—neighbours, if they knew of the birth, would not be likely to acquaint the civil authorities—if they were Hebrews they would keep the secret through sympathy; if Egyptians, they would do so out of pity, and because there was no call upon them to turn "informers." But, as time went on, concealment would become a more and more difficult task. Egypt, like other civilized countries, would have its "informers"—eyes and ears of the king, as they would be called, to gloss over the meanness of their office. The tax-gatherer might make one of his periodical calls unexpectedly, and see or hear the infant. With deep reluctance, but with a feeling that there was no help for it, no other course possible to take, Jochebed came to the conclusion that her home could no longer afford her child a safe refuge. He must be disposed of elsewhere. But who would receive him? Who would risk incurring the king's displeasure? Who, even if willing, would have power to protect the young life so inexpressibly dear to her? Jochebed had to pause, to reflect, to call all her female wit and cleverness to her aid, in order to devise a plan that had, at any rate, a chance of succeeding.

The plan which she devised was the following. She knew the place where a daughter of the reigning Pharaoh was accustomed from time to time to come down to the bank of the sacred stream and bathe herself in its waters. She knew perhaps the character and circumstances of the princess, who, according to Artapanus[1] and Philo,[2] was married, childless, and extremely desirous of having children. She would place her child in this princess's way, in such a manner as would naturally excite her compassion, and would trust that the compassion so aroused might lead her to extend her protection over the unfortunate infant. A princess might venture on steps that no one of inferior rank would dare to take; and might be able confidently to count on her father's pardoning her indiscretion. To bring her child to the princess's notice, Moses's mother constructed a little "ark," or boat, "of bulrushes"—*i.e.* of the papyrus, and, having made it waterproof by means of a coating of bitumen, she put her child in it, carried him to the water's edge, and laid the ark gently among the flags that grew along the stream near its brink. The papyrus was commonly used as a material for boats in Egypt, and was regarded as a protection against croco

[1] Ap. Euseb. "Præp. Ev." ix. 27. [2] "Vit. Mosis," i. 4.

diles, though it may be doubted whether this belief was anything but a superstition. The little boat was laid among the flags to prevent it from floating down the stream, and keep it within sight of the place where the princess was accustomed to bathe. The time at which she would arrive could not be exactly calculated, and, had the ark been allowed to move with the current, it might have floated off long before she made her appearance. Miriam, Moses's sister, was set to watch the ark until the princess should arrive, that no one might interfere with it, or thrust it out further into the stream.

The scheme, skilfully contrived, was effectively carried out, and had a complete success. Pharaoh's daughter, Thermuthis, if we accept the tradition of Josephus,[1] or Merrhis, if we prefer to follow Artapanus, came down with a long train of maidens about the time expected, and proceeded along the river bank to the bathing-place. On her way, she espied the ark among the flags, and sent her chief attendant to draw it out of the water, and bring it to her, that she might see what it contained. On opening it, for it was covered up, "she saw the child; and behold, the babe wept." Hungry perhaps, or chilled by near proximity to the water, or frightened, as young children so often are when left alone, the poor babe was bemoaning its lot, and had given way to tears. The heart of the princess was at once stirred with pity. Something in the surroundings or in the look of the infant caused her to divine the truth, and she exclaimed, "This is one of the Hebrews' children." No mother would have deserted and exposed such a child who was not compelled to do so by some dire necessity (such would be her thoughts). Was there any such necessity laid upon any mothers at the time? Ah! yes. Her own father's edict had gone forth against the male children of the Hebrews, and Hebrew mothers throughout the land were everywhere in the direst straits—must be everywhere seeking if by any means they could preserve or prolong the lives of their newly-born sons. Evidently, the child belonged to this class. Complexion, tint of hair, cast of countenance, unusual features in the attire or in its arrangement, may have in an instant caught her eye, and strengthened her conviction; but her conviction did not change her purpose. Miriam saw the look of favour with which she still regarded the babe, and coming forward at the right moment, cried out,

[1] "Ant. Jud." ii. 9, § 5.

"Shall I go and call to thee a nurse of the Hebrew women, that she may nurse the child for thee?" A Hebrew child, she meant to say, must surely need a Hebrew nurse, to understand it, to conform herself to its ways, to know how it was best that it should be treated during infancy, how it should be fed, dressed, played with, dandled, tossed, talked to. And the princess felt the excellency of the suggestion. "Go," she replied, with the simple brevity characteristic of the antique manners, "Go." The one word was enough. Away sprang the light-footed Hebrew lass to fetch her mother, who was no doubt in hiding near at hand, anxiously awaiting the result of the scheme which she had so cleverly contrived; and the fond mother at once came to her daughter's call, and stood silent before the princess. Pharaoh's daughter, no doubt, carefully scanned her face, and noted her general appearance; then, seeing in both nothing but what was pleasing and suitable, she declared her will. "Take this child away," she said, "and nurse it for me, and I will give thee thy wages."

There was much expressed in this short speech. "Take this child away"—*i.e.* take it with thee to thine own abode; do not bring it after me to my palace; let it have the nurture and treatment which it would have received naturally in the paternal mansion; "nurse it," but "nurse it *for me*"—remember, it is henceforth mine—mine as much as if it had been born in my household—mine as much as if I had borne it myself—"nurse it *for me*," and, at the proper time, restore it to me, and then "I will give thee thy wages"—I will repay the care and trouble that has been spent on my adopted son by a suitable largess. Jochebed "took the child" and withdrew, and carried it to her home, and there "nursed it."

Did the princess suspect nothing? Did she not see through the drama that had been acted under her eyes? Had Miriam seemed to her nothing but an ordinary passer-by? Uninterested in the events, except as a stranger might be interested in what was intrinsically so pathetic? Did she fail to note any eagerness in Jochebed's tones or glances, or anything peculiar in her handling of the child when it was put into her arms, any convulsive clutch, or tender pressure, or long lingering kiss? Surely, the mother could scarcely have contained herself when she saw her child rescued from impending death, rendered safe and secure under the patronage of a great princess, and once more

entrusted to her own loving care. The deep thrill of delight which must have passed through her maternal heart can scarcely have failed to paint itself on her countenance, even if it did not find a vent in word or action, in exclamation of "God be thanked," or convulsive embrace, or warm kiss, or tears of joy. To us it seems almost impossible that the princess did not thoroughly comprehend the whole scene, the relation of the parties each to each, the clever arrangements that had been made by mother and daughter to carry out their scheme, &c., and lend herself to the satisfactory completion of the business. Of course, it was necessary to dissemble. A daughter of the reigning sovereign could not openly admit that she was encouraging and assisting one of her father's subjects to disobey her father's commands. The princess therefore kept her own counsel and affected not to recognize the positions of the several actors in the drama, while she did her best to carry out their wishes and designs. She let the mother have her child to suckle till the natural time for weaning him arrived, while enabling her to meet all inconvenient inquiries with the reply, that it was the princess's adopted child, which she had been hired to nurse during his infancy.

CHAPTER III.

MOSES'S CHILDHOOD.

Name given to the saved child—His early life at the Court—Impressions made on him by his surroundings—His intercourse with his own family—Story told of his trampling on the Pharaoh's crown—His beauty, spirit, and intelligence.

THE name which Moses received has been variously explained. An Egyptian root, *mes* or *meses*, is common as an element in names, where it has the force of "son" or "child," as in Aahmes, "child of the moon," Ramesses, "child of the sun," Amonmes or Amonmeses, "child of Ammon," and the like. Strictly speaking, the word probably means "born from," or "sprung from," and is equivalent of the Latin words *natus*, *ortus*, *satus*, &c. Etymologically it perhaps signified "drawn out," and referred to the act of deliverance by a midwife. It has been thought that this word "meses" was the real name which the Egyptian princess gave to her foundling, and that in giving it she only meant to recognise him as her "child." Josephus, however, supplies an entirely different account. According to him, the meaning of the word "Moses" is "saved from the water," the first syllable *mo*, moaning, "water" in Egyptian, and the remainder of the word, *ses*, or *uses*, meaning "saved."[1] The derivation has in its favour the fact, that *mo-ushe* would in Coptic have the meaning assigned, and the further fact that one of the words for water in the ancient Egyptian was certainly *mo*. From these two accounts that suggested in Exod. ii. 10 wholly differs, since it makes the name Hebrew, and derives it from the Hebrew root

[1] "Ant. Jud." ii. 9, § 6

mâshâh, "to extract, draw forth." Philo Judæus appears to have taken much the same view as Josephus; but he is less exact, since he gives the word one root only, instead of two, and misrepresents that one, declaring that the Egyptian word for water was *môs*, which it certainly was not. Altogether, it is perhaps most probable that Josephus gave the true account, and that "Moses"—more correctly Moÿses, as in the Septuagint Version, or Moÿsus, as in Artapanus[1]—meant "taken from the water," and thus the name which he bore commemorated the circumstances under which the great prophet was saved by the princess.

Transferred from the humble abode of his father to the palace of the princess, Moses was brought up in the Egyptian fashion. As a child, he probably went about, like other Egyptian boys, without clothes, and with his hair shaved off, except a single lock, which depended on one side of the head. He would be waited on by numerous attendants, would be carefully and delicately fed, kept scrupulously clean, and taught the refined manners of the highest circles. His main life would be a Court life. He would live chiefly in the apartments of his mother, which would probably be a portion of the royal residence, and would be furnished with every luxury. At first his attendants would be his mother's handmaids; but ere long the assistance of male instructors would be called in, and his education, in the common sense of the word, would commence. But there is an earlier education than that derived from instructors. The bent and bias of a character is often formed, is always strongly affected, by the individual's earliest surroundings, which unconsciously form his mind and fashion his temper. The sights and sounds presented to us in infancy and early childhood sink into our souls, and constitute a substratum upon which the whole personality of the man is afterwards built. What then were those that the impressible mind of the young Moses first took in from the circumstances of his environment, while he dwelt with his mother in her portion of the royal palace?

There is reason to believe that the Court, at the time, was held during the greater part of the year at Memphis. The situation and appearance of Memphis have been already dwelt upon. Moses would see from the terraces of the royal residence, whither he would be taken to enjoy the cool northern breeze in the summer evenings, the great city of Phthah spread

[1] Ap. Euseb. "Præp. Ev." ix. 27.

before him in all its wealth of architectural ornament, in all its populousness, in all its busy movement of trade and commerce, of pleasure and religion. Noisy crowds would be thronging its streets and squares, heavily-laden vessels would be ascending and descending its mighty river, bright painted sails would be glassing themselves in the calmer reaches of the stream, boats would be darting about, here and there processions with sacred arks lifted up on high would be wending their way through the temple precincts or through the streets of the town, strains of music would be floating in the air, mixed with shouts and cries of all kinds from chariot-drivers, and vendors of wares, and boatmen. Against the orange glow still lighting up the western sky would be seen, silhouetted in sharpest outline, the purple forms of the "Three Great Pyramids," grand monuments, the tombs of mighty kings, sentinels on the edge of that broad desert tract, where life ceased and the kingdom of the dead began. The vastness of the scene around would necessarily impress any intelligent boy with a sense of awe, of wonder, and of mystery; the life and movement of the city would arouse curiosity and the desire to be up and doing; the contrast between the city's stir and the still silence of the western ridge would evoke uneasy thoughts, and perhaps bring the riddle of existence before the just awakening mind.

As he grew older, the boy's acquaintance with Memphis, and the life within its walls, would increase. He would be taken into the streets, probably in a wheeled vehicle, and would see near at hand the moving crowd, which he had hitherto contemplated from a distance. He would, perhaps, occasionally be allowed a sail in a pleasure-boat upon the river. He would be taken to the great Temple of Phthah, and shown the mysterious figures upon the walls, and the strange hieroglyphic writing, covering almost every space from which the figures were absent; and the broad courts, and the solemn corridors, and the calm Osirid images, and perhaps an image of Phthah, grotesque and hideous. Processions of priests, clad in white garments of linen or cotton, and wearing sandals made of the papyrus plant, chanting litanies to Phthah or Ra, would meet him in the courts, and compel him and his attendants to stand aside for them to pass. Or he would see the priests offering sacrifices and prayers, or pouring libations, to the images; or burning incense before them, in their honour. Now and then he might meet the sacred bull,

Apis, as he was called, being led in a festive procession through the main streets of the town, that the inhabitants might see him, and come forth from their dwellings, and make obeisance to the incarnation of Phthah. The Egyptian religion delighted in openly manifesting itself, in setting itself everywhere and at all times before the eyes of the people, in challenging and compelling their attention. All the grandest edifices were temples; next to the king, the persons most considered were the priests; religious festivals, involving great gatherings and long processions, were frequent; men, women, and even children attended them; Moses must have been early familiar with the external aspect, at any rate, of the Egyptian worship, and must have frequently witnessed the revolting rites of the prevalent idolatry.

But there was another phase of the early life of Moses at Memphis of a softer character. It is impossible to suppose that the princess, who had employed his mother to suckle him, at once on his adoption broke off the connection between her adopted child and his real family. The princess did not, as Philo imagines,[2] pretend that he was actually her son. His Hebrew origin was known, both to himself (Exod. ii. 11) and to the Egyptians.[3] Must we not conclude that the connection between Moses and his family was continued after he became an inmate of the royal residence, and that, from time to time, he was taken to see his relatives, or that they were allowed to come and see him at the palace? Had Jochebed been merely Moses's foster-mother, she would have been permitted a certain familiarity, according to the ideas of the East. As his real mother, her claim was greater, and cannot have been disallowed. We must regard Moses, therefore, as partly under the influence of the princess and the Court, partly under that of his father and mother, his brother and sister, during the whole period of his early residence in Egypt. His intercourse with his family was of the highest importance, as respected his religious belief and his sympathy with his countrymen. But for it, he would naturally have been brought up a believer in the Egyptian polytheism and an idolater; he would probably have cared little for his "brethren," even if he were not ashamed of acknowledging them. As it was, the principles of the patriarchal religion were impressed upon him while he was still a child, and

[1] Herod. ii. 60. [2] "Vit. Mosis." i. p. 83.
[3] Joseph. "Ant. Jud." ii. 9, § 7.

he grew up a firm adherent of monotheism, a believer in the promises made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and a contemner of idols and idolatry. He also kept touch with his countrymen, felt sorrow for their sufferings, and hoped in time to ameliorate their lot. Instead of being wholly, he was only half, Egyptianized. He had that substratum of Hebrew feeling and Hebrew training which fitted him to be a leader of his nation, whose confidence would never have gone out to one wholly reared and taught by their oppressors.

According to Josephus, while Moses was still a young child, he escaped another peril as great as that which had menaced him in his infancy. The princess, Thermuthis, as he calls her, had taken her adopted son with her to her father's apartments, wishing to exhibit before him the boy's beauty and cleverness, and with some hope of inducing him to designate the child as his successor. She put her treasure into her father's arms, with a little speech, in which she called attention to his more than human loveliness, and his high and generous spirit, at the same time revealing the ambitious hopes which she ventured to cherish on his behalf. The monarch, wishing to gratify her by a show of willingness to entertain her request, took his crown off his own head, and put it on the head of the child; whereupon the child got down from his lap, took off the crown to examine it, and then placing it on the ground, put his feet upon it and tried to stand up. A sacred scribe, who, a little before the birth of Moses, had prophesied that a Hebrew child was about to be born who would lay low the power of Egypt, happened to be standing by, and, seeing what the child had done, he cried with a loud voice, and said: "This, O King, is the child, whom the gods told us to kill for our own security. See the witness which he bears to the prophecy—he has put thy sovereignty beneath him, and is trampling thy crown under his feet. Slay him, then; and cause the Egyptians to cease from their fears, and the Hebrews from their hopes." Thermuthis, on hearing the speech, sprang to the child, and snatching him up bore him away. The king declined to follow the scribe's advice; and thus Moses escaped this second danger.[1]

There is an allusion in this narrative, and elsewhere important testimony is borne, to the extreme beauty of Moses, not only as an infant, but as a boy and youth. Philo tells us that his

[1] "Ant. Iud." ii. 9, §. 7.

appearance was at once beautiful and noble, full of modesty and yet full also of dignity.[1] Josephus says that there was no one, however careless about a child's looks, who was not struck with astonishment at his loveliness on first beholding him. As he passed along the streets many of those whom he met would turn their heads to look after him, and labouring men would forget their occupations and stand to gaze.[2] He is also said to have been remarkably tall for his age, full of spirit, strong, and capable of enduring hard work. As for his intelligence, it was extraordinary, and showed itself in every subject to which his attention was turned. The general feeling was that there was something more than human about the boy; and while the Hebrews took courage and felt hope revive in their breasts through the promise of future greatness which they discovered in him, the Egyptians generally looked upon him with an eye of suspicion, as one whom they had reason to dread, should he grow to manhood.

[1] "Vit. Mosis," p. 83. [2] "Ant. Jud." ii. 9, §. 6.

CHAPTER IV.

EDUCATION.

The physical training of Moses—Egyptian athletic games—Early instruction—Reading and writing—Egyptian writing involved a training in art—Arithmetic—Music and rhythm—Later instruction—University of Heliopolis—Subjects of the University course—Geometry—Literature—Astronomy—Law—Medicine—Philosophy of Symbolism—Position of Moses among the students.

It would seem that in Egypt, as in most civilized countries, education was regarded as including a course of training, both for the mind, and also for the body. The Egyptians had a variety of games, of which a considerable number were gymnastic or athletic. One of the chief of these was wrestling. The monuments depict wrestlers in all manner of attitudes, preparing to engage, taking their first hold, intertwined, clutching at each other's arms and legs, one forcing the other to the ground, both on the ground, yet still continuing the struggle. "The two combatants," says Sir Gardner Wilkinson, "generally approached each other, holding their arms in an inclined position before the body; and each endeavoured to seize his adversary in the manner best suited to his mode of attack. It was allowable to take hold of any part of the body, the head, neck, or legs; and the struggle was frequently continued on the ground, after one or both had fallen; a mode of wrestling common also to the Greeks, by whom it was denominated *Anaclinopalé*. I do not find that they had the same sign of acknowledging their defeat in this game as the Greeks, which was by holding up a finger in

token of submission; it was probably done by the Egyptians with a word."[1]

Another exercise was fighting with single-sticks. The left arm was defended by a sort of shield strapped round it from the wrist to the elbow, and could thus be used to turn off or intercept blows. The right hand had the protection of a basket or guard, projecting over the knuckles. The sticks employed were somewhat short, not more than about thirty inches in length. The combatants had no defence for the head, beyond the wig ordinarily worn by men of the well-to-do classes; but it was perhaps a law of the game that neither combatant should strike at the head of his adversary.

The game of ball, so much practised by the Romans, was also a favourite amusement in Egypt, especially among females. It consisted, however, so far as appears, simply in tossing the ball and catching it, the Egyptians having nothing that resembled fives, or rackets, or tennis, or hockey. On this subject Sir G. Wilkinson tells us that "the game of ball was not confined to children, or to either sex, though the mere amusement of throwing and catching it appears to have been considered more particularly adapted to females. They had different methods of playing. Sometimes a person unsuccessful in catching the ball was obliged to suffer another to ride on her back, who continued to enjoy this post until she also missed it—the ball being thrown by an opposite party, mounted in the same manner, and placed at a certain distance, according to the space previously fixed by the players. . . . Sometimes they showed their skill in catching three or more balls in succession, the hands occasionally crossed over the breast; and the more simple mode of throwing it up to a height and catching it, known to the Greeks as *urania*, was common in Egypt. They had also the game described by Homer as having been played by Halius and Laodamas before Alcinoüs,[2] in which one party threw the ball as high as he could, and the other, leaping up, caught it on its fall, before his feet again touched the ground."[3]

A game, in which strength and dexterity were about equally balanced, was one wherein two opponents contended in throwing knives or daggers, so as to remain fixed in a block of hard

[1] "Ancient Egyptians," edition of 1878; vol. ii. pp. 72, 73.
[2] Hom. "Odyss." ix. l. 374.
[3] Wilkinson, "Ancient Egyptians," vol. ii. p. 67.

wood; the contention being which of the two could strike nearest to the centre, or to the edge, as agreed beforehand. One, where strength alone was tested, consisted in lifting heavy bags of sand, and swinging them at arms' length over the head. The person who could swing the heaviest bag was the victor.

These, and other games of a similar character, were among the ordinary amusements of children and youths in Egypt, and were regarded as at once promoting health by the exercise of the body and refreshing the mind by pleasant entertainment. Moses would naturally be required to take his part in such exercises, and that he did so is implied by Philo, who says that he soon conceived a distaste for such amusements,[1] and showed himself superior to them, preferring more serious occupations. It may be doubted, however, whether Philo, in thus writing, is not rather following out his own views of how the perfect man ought to act in his youth, than delivering to us any Egyptian or Jewish tradition on the subject. Philo's leanings are towards asceticism, and he would fain persuade us that the great lawgiver of his nation held the same views; but it is at least doubtful whether he had any trustworthy authority for his statements. Moses is likely to have been of a serious turn as boy and youth; but his Egyptian instructors would regard the training of the body as scarcely less necessary than the training of the mind, and would see that he passed through the ordinary course of gymnastic exercises, and that his bodily vigour was as well developed as that of any of his contemporaries.

Parallel, even with the earliest physical training, would be a certain amount of instruction, directed to the development of the intellect. Like other children, Moses had to begin by learning to read and write. In Egypt these accomplishments were not very easy of acquirement. The Egyptians had at the time two forms of writing, one known to the Greeks as the hieroglyphic, and the other as the hieratic. In the hieroglyphic, articulate sounds were represented by pictures of objects, which expressed, sometimes letters, sometimes syllables, sometimes whole words, occasionally ideas. The number of the signs used was very large, probably not less than a thousand. Several of them expressed more than one sound, while one and the same sound was sometimes expressed by several symbols. To learn the Egyptian alphabet was nearly as difficult as to

[1] "Vit. Mosis," p. 83.

learn the Chinese, and must have occupied many months, if not years. To read, it was necessary to know, not only what articulations each symbol had, but which of them was appropriate in the connection in which each symbol occurred. Writing was still more difficult; for as all the signs were objects, it was necessary, in order to write, to be able to draw a vast variety of objects with distinctness and accuracy. Among the most ordinary characters were the eagle, which expressed *a*; the owl, which expressed *m*; the chicken, which expressed *u*; the duck, which expressed *sa*; the hawk, which expressed *har*; and the vulture, which expressed *mut*. Hieroglyphic writing, to be intelligible, had to mark unmistakably which bird was meant, out of these many; and indeed there were others also in the hieroglyphic list, as the swallow and the ibis. Animals had to be drawn with equal frequency, as the lion, the wild-goat, the ox, the crocodile, the jackal, the hare. It has been well observed by Mr. R. S. Poole, that to write Egyptian required "a training in art."[1] Some training of the kind was requisite in all cases, but, in the case of those who were receiving the best education, much more was necessary; for they were expected to "draw beautifully," depicting each bird, and animal, and insect, and flower, with a firm sure hand, rapidly and artistically. Nor was the other form of writing known to the Egyptians in the age of Moses much easier of acquisition. The hieratic was a cursive writing based on the hieroglyphic, and scarcely to be learnt or read apart from it. Whether a knowledge of it was included in the general scheme of a liberal education, is unknown to us. But even if it were, the student's burthen would not have been much lightened, for the hieratic forms are not less numerous than the hieroglyphic, and in many cases so closely resemble each other as to lead to infinite difficulty and confusion.

It is said that, about the time of Moses, another language besides Egyptian was taught to students. "The documents of the scribes of that age not only show by their accurate transliteration of Semitic words that the writers had a mastery of the foreign sounds they wrote; but more than this, it was the fashion at this time to introduce Semitic words into the Egyptian language."[2] As all educated Romans in the days of Cicero learnt Greek, and all Russians in the time of Alexander I. were

[1] R. Stuart Poole, "Cities of Egypt," p. 141. [2] Ibid. p. 142.

taught French, so in the days of Moses all educated Egyptians had to be familiar with a Semitic dialect, which, if not exactly Hebrew, was at any rate closely akin to it. Here Moses must have had an advantage over his Egyptian contemporaries, for Hebrew was his mother tongue, which he had begun to speak before his mother gave him back to the princess, and had thenceforth used in his intercourse with the members of his family.

After reading and writing, or rather in conjunction with them, long before they were fully mastered, would come arithmetic. A knowledge of numbers, to a certain extent, is needed for the common business of life. The Egyptians were good arithmeticians. They invented the signs, which we call Arabic, and which we still use, for one, two, three, and four ; they carried numeration as far, at any rate, as millions ; our common multiplication table is thought to have been of Egyptian origin.[1] They dealt not only with whole numbers, but with fractions, for which they had a peculiar notation, and which they added or subtracted without difficulty. The higher operations of arithmetic were probably unknown to them ; and it may be suspected that they indulged in mystical speculations on the virtues and qualities of particular numbers, which were purely fanciful and incapable of leading to any useful result.

Philo says,[2] that among the early acquirements of Moses was a knowledge of music, both vocal and instrumental, of harmony, and of rhythm. That the Hebrews had some musical knowledge when they quitted Egypt is apparent from the account, which is given in Exodus xv., of Miriam, and the women who were her companions, after the passage of the Red Sea. That Moses was skilled in rhythm is evident, both from his "song" in the same chapter, and from the splendid poem which occupies the greater part of Deut. xxxii. There is thus no reason to question Philo's assertion, which may have been derived from tradition, or possibly from his knowledge of the general plan of education among the ancient Egyptians. Music was certainly known and practised in Egypt from a very remote period. In ancient tombs near the Pyramids, probably belonging to about the time of their construction, we see bands of five, six, and even eight performers, some of whom sing, while others play

[1] Wilkinson, "Ancient Egyptians," vol. ii. p. 492.

[2] "Vit. Mosis," l. s. c.

upon various instruments. The harp, the lyre, the flute, the double pipe, the guitar, and the tambourine are the instruments most frequently represented. No Egyptian musical scores have come down to us; and it is thus impossible to say what were the ideas prevalent on the subject of harmony, or of melody; but perhaps, if their ideas were ascertained, we should not find them to be very different from our own.

The proficiency of Moses in rhythm, to which Philo testifies, and of which his works give evidence, was, doubtless, in the main, derived from a knowledge of the Egyptian poetry. The Egyptians were great lovers of song. Almost all workmen sang at their tasks; and at the vintage and the harvest-time there were specially favourite melodies, which rang through the air in the country districts, and were probably known to every one. Epic poems recorded the exploits of monarchs; lyrical songs declared the praises of the gods; dirges were recited at funerals, merry roundelays at feasts. We may gather from Philo that something like a scientific study of rhythm was a part of the education of boys, who were inducted into the mysteries of the various Egyptian metres, as our own youth are into the intricacies of sapphics and iambics, of alcaics, asclepiads, and hendecasyllables.

The boyish education of Moses was most likely conducted at the Court, under a pædagogue or tutor, assisted by various masters; but as he approached towards manhood, he would be sent to one of the two great universities. No otherwise could he have become "learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians" (Acts vii. 22); no otherwise would his training have befitted his rank and station. The seats of learning at the time were Heliopolis and Hermopolis, the one on the eastern verge of the Delta, about twenty miles north of Memphis; the other in the lower Nile valley, half-way between Memphis and Thebes. The tradition says that Heliopolis was the university chosen. It was much nearer to Memphis than Hermopolis, and would have a special attraction for any Hebrew youth from the connection between its priestly house and the patriarch Joseph (Gen. xli. 45). Heliopolis, or On, was one of the most ancient of the Egyptian cities, and was famous on two accounts—it was a great seat of learning, and it was the principal centre of the worship of the sun. The description of it given by Dean Stanley is so graphic that we shall venture to transfer it to our

pages. "It stands on the edge of the cultivated ground. The vast enclosure of its brick walls still remains, now almost powdered into dust, but, according to the tradition of the Septuagint, the very walls built by the Israelite bondmen. Within the enclosure, in the space now occupied by tangled gardens, rose the great Temple of the Sun, which gave its name and object to the city. How important in Egypt was that worship may be best understood by remembering that from it were derived the chief names by which kings and priests were called—'Pha-raoh,' 'The Child of the Sun,'[1] 'Po-ti-phe-rah,' 'The Servant of the Sun.' And what its aspect was in Heliopolis may be known partly from the detailed description which Strabo has left of its buildings, as still standing in his own time; and yet more from the fact that the one Egyptian temple which to this day retains its sculptures and internal arrangements almost unaltered, that of Ipsambul, is the temple of Ra, or the Sun. In Heliopolis, as elsewhere, was the avenue of sphinxes leading to the great gateway, where flew, from gigantic flagstaffs, the red and blue streamers. Before and behind the gateway stood, two by two, the petrifactions of the sun-beam, the obelisks, of which one alone now remains to mourn the loss of all its brethren. Close by was the sacred Spring of the Sun, a rare sight in Egypt, and therefore the more precious, and probably the original cause of the selection of this remote corner of Egypt for so famous a sanctuary. This, too, still remains, almost choked by the rank luxuriance of the aquatic plants which have gathered over its waters. Round the cloisters of the vast courts into which these gateways opened, were spacious mansions, forming the canonical residences, if one may so call them, of the priests and professors of On: for Heliopolis, we must remember, was the Oxford of ancient Egypt, the seat of its learning in ancient times; the university, or perhaps rather the college, gathered round the Temple of the Sun, as Christ Church round the old cathedral or shrine of S. Frideswide. . . . In the centre of all stood the Temple itself. Over the portal, we can hardly doubt, was the figure of the Sun-god, not in the sublime indistinctness of his natural orb, nor yet in the beautiful impersonation of the Grecian Apollo, but in the strange grotesque form of the hawk-headed monster. Enter: and the

[1] This derivation is now questioned, that of *Per-ao*, "the Great House," being preferred.

dark temple opens and contracts successively into its outermost, its inner, and its innermost hall; the Osirid figures in their placid majesty support the first, the wild and savage exploits of kings and heroes fill the second, and in the furthest recess of all, underneath the carved figure of the Sun-god, and beside the solid altar, sate in his gilded cage the sacred hawk, or lay crouched upon his purple bed the sacred black calf, Mnevis or Urmer; each the living, almost incarnate, representation of the deity of the temple. Thrice a day before the deified beast the incense was offered, and once a month the solemn sacrifice."[1]

There are reasons for questioning the latter part of this description. No sacred animal was housed in the inmost sanctuary of the Sun-god at Heliopolis, since that sanctuary was ordinarily kept closed, sometimes with a seal upon the doors.[2] The animals, of which there were several, must have occupied some other position, and most probably had their separate houses, in different parts of the precinct. Besides the black bull, Mnevis, there were maintained in the temple a lion and lioness, a cat, and a specimen of the bennu, a kind of crane, which was regarded as representing the mythical phœnix. Heliopolis was the locality to which especially belonged the phœnix legend. The bird came from Arabia once in five hundred years, carrying the body of his father enclosed in a ball of myrrh, and deposited it in the Temple of the Sun. In form he much resembled the eagle; but his plumage was in part red, in part golden.[3] Herodotus remarks, with some *naïveté*, that he had never seen him—a privation which, however, he must have shared with other travellers.

We have no picture of university life in Heliopolis, either in the time of Moses or at any other period; but we have some knowledge of the character of the instruction which was there imparted to students. Geometry was certainly taught. The science originated in Egypt, where it was a primary necessity on account of the fact that every year the inundation obliterated many of the landmarks and made a fresh mensuration and demarcation of properties imperative. The mensuration of land led on to general surveys, which could scarcely be executed except trigonometrically, and the science of trigonometry must,

[1] "Lectures on the Jewish Church," vol. i. pp. 87–90.
[2] "Records of the Past," vol. ii. p. 98. [3] Herodotus, ii. 73.

therefore, it would seem, have been cultivated to some extent.[1] If the intended height of a pyramid was determined from the first, the angle of the slope of the sides might be definitely fixed by trigonometrical calculation, but scarcely otherwise. The higher branches of mathematics were, of course, unknown to the Egyptians; and even geometry was but little elaborated until the time of Euclid. It is noticeable, however, that the Greek who first did much for geometry was an Alexandrian Greek, and the suspicion arises that he may have derived much of his improved science from Egyptian sources.

Other branches of knowledge cultivated and taught at Heliopolis in Moses' time were literature, especially poetry, astronomy, law, medicine, and "the philosophy of symbols." It was an object with all persons of the higher ranks in Egypt to acquire a clear and elegant style. For this purpose the masterpieces of antiquity, whether in poetry or prose, were carefully studied, and composition was regularly practised under the guidance of instructors. Epistolary correspondence was a branch of composition which received special attention, and the model letters of the best authors were set before the student for imitation. It is not clear whether the students were practised in composing poetry; but on the whole it is most probable that the curriculum included verse as well as prose writing.

The Egyptians received at an early date some astronomical knowledge from the Babylonians, and afterwards made considerable advances in the science of astronomy themselves. Astronomy was necessary for the construction of the calendar, and was closely connected with religion. The Egyptian astronomers succeeded in determining, with a near approach to exactness, the solar year, which they made to consist of 365¼ days. They knew that the moon derived its light from the sun, that the sun was the centre of our system, and that the revolution of the earth upon its axis was the cause of day and night. There was an observatory at Heliopolis in the time of Strabo, which had probably come down from a high antiquity, since astronomical observations were recorded on the temple walls at Thebes at a very remote period. The Egyptians paid special attention to eclipses, both of the sun and the moon; to occulta

[1] Dr. Birch says, "A geometric and arithmetic papyrus, now in the British Museum, has a portion devoted to the mensuration *and triangulation* of fields."

tions of the planets; to the motions of the planets, and the determination of their periodic and synodic times; and to the construction of tables of the fixed stars and the mapping of them out into constellations. They were acquainted with the obliquity of the ecliptic to the equator, and found a way of determining an *exact* meridian line. It has been supposed that they were acquainted with the procession of the equinoxes; but the evidence on this point is insufficient. Altogether their astronomy must be pronounced not very advanced, and rather empirical than scientific, rather practical than speculative. Dr. Brugsch says of it: "Astronomy with the Egyptians was not that mathematical science which calculates the movements of the stars through the construction of grand systems of the heavens. It was rather a collection of the observations which they had made on the periodically recurring phenomena of earth and sky in Egypt, the bearings of which upon each other could not long escape the notice of the priests, who in the clear Egyptian nights observed the brilliant luminaries of their firmament. Their astronomical knowledge was founded on the base of empiricism, and not on that of mathematical inquiry."[1] Such however as their astronomical knowledge was, the students at Heliopolis had the benefit of it, and were perhaps as much advanced in the science as the bulk of those who in modern times enjoy the advantages of a university training.

It is a reasonable conclusion of Egyptologists that the principles and practice of law must have been taught at Heliopolis.[2] The Egyptians had a large body of written laws forming a portion of some of their sacred books, and believed to have emanated originally from a Divine source. These laws were, for the most part, admirable, and were administered by trained judges, who were in no case allowed to depart from them or call them in question, since such conduct would have been rebellion against the Deity. The kings, though despotic in the sense that there were no means of calling them to account, had not the right, and did not even claim the right, of setting aside the law; and the courts throughout the kingdom heard and decided ordinary causes without any interference from any superior authority. The class of judges was large; and those who aimed at the career must have qualified themselves for it by some previous

[1] "Histoire d'Egypte," part i. p. 39.

[2] R. Stuart Poole, "Cities of Egypt," p. 143.

course of study. That the place where they studied was Heliopolis cannot be said to be proved, but is, at any rate, in the highest degree probable.

The same must be said with regard to medicine and its subordinate science, chemistry. Medicine engaged the attention of the Egyptians from the earliest ages, and was pursued with ardour and success. The whole country was subject to sanitary regulations, the kings themselves not being exempted from obedience to them. Very ancient works on medicine existed, and were regarded with extreme respect, being attributed either to the god Thoth, or to one or more of the ancient kings. The importance of anatomy was recognized, and the dissection of the human subject allowed and practised. In the time of Herodotus specialism seems to have prevailed, and to have been carried, indeed, to a ridiculous extent,[1] but we have no evidence that this system was followed in the earlier times. The medical school of Heliopolis is not to be taxed with any sanction of the principle that "each physician should treat only one disorder."

Science, however, was probably regarded at Heliopolis as a secondary and inferior part of education; the main object of study was religion, the full understanding of the Egyptian sacred books. The professors of the university were also the priests of the great temple, and the colleges of students were under their control, the studies under their superintendence. The youths who came to Heliopolis with the mere vague notions on the subject of religion which were to be gathered from attendance in the various temples and participation in the various festivals, and who must have therefore been, like the mass of the common people, idolaters and polytheists, had to be taught by their religious instructors the deep truths that underlay the external popular religion, the realities shadowed forth by the grotesque imagery of hawk-headed, cow-headed, and ibis-headed idols, of sacred goats and sacred bulls and sacred crocodiles, of processions of the Boat of the Sun, of Osiris myths, of Nile worship, and the like. Philo says that one of the subjects in which Moses received instruction from his Egyptian instructors was "the philosophy of symbolism"; and this would exactly express the enlightenment which those persons received who passed from the crowd of the uninitiated and uninstructed into the select number of the fully instructed in religion. For

[1] See Herodotus, ii. 84.

the entire external aspect of the Egyptian religion was a complicated and multitudinous symbolism. "The various deities," as Sir Gardner Wilkinson long ago pointed out,[1] "were mere emblematic representations of the One and Sole God; for the priests who were initiated into, and who understood the mysteries of their religion, believed in one Deity alone, and, in performing their adorations to any particular member of their Pantheon, addressed themselves directly to the sole ruler of the universe, through that particular form. Each form (whether called Ptah, Amen, or any other of the figures representing various characters of the Deity) was one of His attributes; in the same manner as our expressions, 'the Creator,' 'the Omnipotent,' 'the Almighty,' or any other title, indicate one and the same Being." Or, as I have myself observed elsewhere,[2] "the gods of the popular mythology were understood, in the esoteric religion, to be either personified attributes of the Deity or parts of the nature which He had created, considered as informed and inspired by Him. Num or Kneph represented the creative mind, Phthah the creative hand, or act of creating; Maut represented matter, Ra the sun, Khons the moon, Seb the earth, Khem the generative power in nature, Nut the upper hemisphere of heaven, Athor the lower world, or under hemisphere; Thoth personified the Divine wisdom, Ammon perhaps the Divine mysteriousness or incomprehensibility, Osiris (according to some) the Divine goodness. It is difficult in many cases to fix on the exact quality, act, or part of nature intended; but the principle admits of no doubt. No educated Egyptian priest certainly, probably no educated layman, conceived of the popular gods as really separate and distinct beings. All knew that there was but One God, and understood that when worship was offered to Khem, or Kneph, or Phthah, or Maut, or Thoth, or Ammon, the One God was worshipped in some one of His forms, or in some one of His aspects. It does not appear that in more than a very few cases did the Egyptian religion, as conceived of by the initiated, deify created beings, or constitute a class of secondary gods who owed their existence to the Supreme God. Ra was not a Sun-Deity with a distinct and separate existence, but the Supreme God acting in the sun, making His light to shine on the earth, warming, cheering, and

[1] "Ancient Egyptians," vol. ii. p. 476.

[2] "History of Ancient Egypt," vol. i. pp. 315, 316.

blessing it ; and so Ra might be worshipped with all the highest titles of honour, as, indeed, might any god, except the very few which are more properly called *genii*, and which corresponded to the angels of the Christian system."

Symbolism was the one and only key to the Egyptian religion ; but it was a key of a most complicated kind, and it required a long course of instruction to enable the neophyte to use it properly. It had to be applied to the animal worship, to the various forms and ceremonies of the religion, to the Osirid myth, and to the other sagas. There must have been a large field for it in the explanation of the Ritual, or Book of the Dead, which is a long composition of the most obscure and mystic character. Probably the priests alone, or those who were intended for the priesthood, pursued their study of symbolism to the furthest possible point, so as to understand exactly the esoteric meaning of each word and phrase of the Ritual. Ordinary lay students may have been merely taught the general principle, and left to themselves to apply it. The more curious and intelligent of such students may have been carried somewhat further, but are not likely to have been able to devote to this single study the time requisite for obtaining a thorough mastery of it.

The question here naturally arises, whether Moses was among the lay, or among the priestly, students. According to some authorities, he was an actual priest, and bore a priestly name in addition to his name of Moses, which, if we trust Chæremon,[2] was Tisithen, if we trust Manetho,[3] Osarsiph. But it is scarcely conceivable that Moses really entered the Egyptian priesthood, even if we take the most favourable view of the inner meaning of the Egyptian religion. The priests had invented, and maintained the outward polytheism and idolatry, as the only religion suitable to the mass of the people ; they inculcated it ; they administered its rites ; they sanctioned its grossness, its licentiousness, its lowering and debasing materialism. If Moses, as we have supposed, learnt the religion of his forefathers from the members of his own family, and adhered to it, even though a resident at the Pharaoh's Court, he would necessarily have shrunk from the priestly office with its responsibilities, even if the priests would have been willing to admit him to it. But, according to Josephus,[4] there was from first to last an antagon-

[2] "History of Ancient Egypt," p. 137.
[3] Ap. Joseph. "C. Apion." i.
[3] Ibid. i. 26, 28, 31.
[4] "Ant. Jud." ii. 9,

ism between him and the priests, who constantly laid plots against his life, and were so far from considering him one of themselves, that they looked upon him as a dangerous rival and enemy. We must therefore regard Moses at Heliopolis as a lay student, not in favour with the authorities, doubtless admitted freely to whatever instruction was given in secular subjects, but taught the customary explanations of the established religious practices and of the sacred texts with some reserve—perhaps obtaining his knowledge of these subjects rather from his fellow students than the University professors.

CHAPTER V.

EARLY MANHOOD OF MOSES.

Anomalous position of an adopted foundling at the Pharaonic Court—Annoyances to which Moses would be subjected—Courses of life which would naturally be open to him—The official life—The literary life—The life of a soldier; its attraction at the time—Grounds for concluding that Moses adopted the military life—Training which it involved—Moses in the Hittite wars—Account given by Josephus of Moses' successes against the Ethiopians—The account criticized.

His university education concluded, Moses must have returned to the Court, and have resumed his position in his mother's household. But the question must now have presented itself to his mind, which presents itself to almost all sooner or later. What was he to do with his life, how was he to employ the talents and the acquirements which were his by nature and training? The position of an adopted foundling at the Court of an Egyptian king, and that foundling a foreigner, was an anomalous, and can scarcely have been a pleasant, one. The threatened assassinations, of which Josephus speaks, are probably fictions, and the extreme aversion in which Moses was held by the priests is no doubt exaggerated; but jealousies, we may be sure, were awakened by the favour shewn to an alien interloper, and an atmosphere of suspicion and ill-will was created around him. There could be no one among the courtiers who would really truly sympathize with his feelings when he was vexed or hurt, since there was no one who occupied anything like the same position. He may have had some hangers-on and flatterers, but he can scarcely have had a friend. The courtiers generally would look down upon him on account

of his birth, envy him in respect of the high favour with which he was regarded by the Princess, and dislike him as one who in creed and race and tone of thought was quite different from themselves. The result would be a series of slights and impertinences on the part of the *jeunesse dorée* of the period, which would sting and annoy the recipient, without giving him sufficient cause for serious complaint or remonstrance, and these would produce a growing sense on Moses' part of injury and isolation.

To hang about the Court from year to year as a mere idler, one of the useless class, *fruges consumere nati*, must have been in any case abhorrent to a man of the temperament of Moses, and in his peculiar position must have seemed to him specially undesirable. We may assume that it was not long after quitting Heliopolis that he seriously placed before himself the courses of life open to him, and considered carefully their several attractions. The most obvious life, to a person circumstanced as he was, would have been the official life. "Egypt swarmed with a bureaucracy—a bureaucracy which was powerful, numerous, and cleverly arranged in such a graduated series, that the most bureaucratic countries of the modern world may with reason be said to have had nothing superior to it.[1] Partly in the capital, partly scattered about the country, were hundreds, or rather thousands, of official personages, nomarchs, toparchs, governors of towns, judges, magistrates, collectors of taxes, superintendents of storehouses, treasurers, registrars, and the like; all of them receiving their appointments from the Crown, and occupying a high and honourable position. Nothing would have been easier for Moses than to have asked the Princess who had adopted him, to obtain for him from the reigning Pharaoh, her father or her brother, one of these civil appointments, by means of which he would have set his foot on the first rung of the official ladder, and might have risen through the many gradations to the highest rung of all. But the official life, in Egypt as elsewhere, was probably monotonous; it involved, during many years, complete subordination and much uninteresting drudgery; it may have required an occasional, or a constant acknowledgment, of the idolatry everywhere established and maintained as the religion of the State. Naturally enough, Moses was not attracted by it. Could he have mounted *per*

[1] Lenormant, "Histoire Ancienne de l'Orient," vol. i. p. 487; Birch, "Egypt from the Earliest Times," p. xix.

saltum, like Joseph, to the highest place (Gen. xli. 39–44), he would perhaps have overcome his repugnance, and have become a distinguished Egyptian civilian; but the prospect of toiling from grade to grade did not tempt him, and he decided that the official life would not satisfy his aspirations.

The literary life may next have presented itself to his thoughts. It was, to a considerable extent, connected with the official life, to which in a great number of instances it served as a stepping-stone. Proficiency in letters attracted public attention, and the literary man—the "scribe," as he was called—often received offers of civil employment, and commonly accepted them. But literature was also pursued by many as their only occupation, and was recognized as containing within itself many attractions and delights. "Love letters as thy mother," says an early Egyptian author; "it is a greater possession than all employments." And again—"Consider that there is not an employment destitute of superior ones, except the scribe's, which is the first." The literary man was held in high honour; he was invited everywhere, even to the royal table. "Truly no scribe," exclaims the writer above quoted, "is without eating the things of the royal palace of the King."[1] Such men as Pentaour, Anna, Kakabu, Hor, Amen-em-api, Bek-en-ptah, Pan-bas, not only had the *entrée* to good society, but lived on intimate terms with the highest personages in the land. Moses, with his great literary talents, his strong if undeveloped poetic powers, might well have aspired to join the noble company of authors, which formed one of the main glories of the times wherein he lived. But the literary life would have afforded no scope for the exercise of his practical energies, and, however respectable, would perhaps at the time have scarcely been thought worthy of a scion, albeit an adopted one, of the royal stock. Moses, at any rate, was not attracted by it. Though "learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians" (Acts vii. 22), he was not content to take up the *rôle* of a mere man of learning, or to pass his life in celebrating the deeds of others, without doing anything which should make him worthy of being celebrated himself.

But if neither the literary life nor the life of a government official was sufficiently attractive to content the aspirations of the young Hebrew, taking his first outlook upon the world wherein he had to play his part, what other possibilities were

[1] "Records of the Past," vol. viii. pp. 148, 153, 156.

there, what other lines of occupation? Merely professional careers, the life of a physician, or a lawyer, or an artist, were even less eligible than those which we have supposed him to have contemplated and rejected. Moses cannot be imagined to have given them so much as a thought. Though of humble birth, he held the position of a prince, and no occupation could be suitable to him, which was not recognized by public opinion as princely. Rank has its obligations. Royal Highnesses find but few walks in life open to them. They cannot accept a metropolitan practice, or become lawyers in a provincial town.

There remained, however, one life which we have not yet passed under review—a life royal, princely, which the king himself led. This was the life of a soldier. Every Egyptian monarch of the ancient dynasties led out his army in person, and fought at its head. Egypt, since the times of Apepi and Joseph, had been engaged in a perpetual series of hostilities, either with neighbouring, or with distant, nations. The Thothmeses and Amenhoteps of the eighteenth dynasty had not been content, like former kings of Egypt, to defend their frontiers, repulse invaders, and enlarge the limits of the empire by attaching to it here and there a small province. While the Hebrews were quietly feeding their flocks and herds in Goshen, and growing from a family into a tribe, and from a tribe into a nation, they had commenced a career of aggression, had marched their bands of disciplined troops into Asia, had overrun and conquered all Syria and Western Mesopotamia, had made raids into Assyria, passed the Tigris, plundered Nineveh, and crossed swords with the great Assyrian monarchs, who then held their Court at Kileh-Sherghat, or Asshur. Thothmes I. had begun these distant conquests. He had marched an army through Palestine and Syria, crossed the Euphrates into Mesopotamia, engaged the natives in a long series of battles and defeated them more than once with great slaughter. Thothmes III., "the Alexander of Egyptian history,"[1] had not only invaded Syria and Western Mesopotamia, but conquered them, had established a strong military post at Arban on the river Khabour, and from this post had carried his arms across the Tigris into Assyria Proper, and forced the Assyrian monarch to pay him a tribute. He had warred in Phœnicia, in Cilicia, and in Commagene; he had

[1] Brugsch, "History of Egypt," vol. i. p. 316.

collected a fleet and reduced Cyprus ; he had marched with his troops from Nubia to the Taurus range, and from Cyrene to beyond Nineveh ; he had borne off from the subject countries 11,000 captives, 1,670 chariots, 3,639 horses, 4,491 of the larger cattle, above 35,000 goats, silver to the amount of 3,940 pounds, and gold to the amount of 9,054 pounds, besides enormous quantities of corn and wine, together with incense, balsam, honey, ivory, ebony, and other rare woods, lapis-lazuli and other precious stones, furniture, statues, vases, dishes, basins, tent-poles, bows, habergeons, fruit-trees, live birds and monkeys. Amen-hotep II., son of Thothmes III., had, after the death of his father, recovered the various countries subdued by him, which had revolted on his decease. Other kings, notably Ramesses I., the founder of the nineteenth dynasty, and Seti I., his son and successor, had contended in Asia with a new enemy, the Khita or Hittites, and had won fame and glory by their victories. Moses had, it is probable, been growing up while the later of these successes were being obtained, and had witnessed the enthusiasm with which Seti was welcomed back to Egypt by thousands upon thousands of his subjects; when he returned in triumph from some of his Asiatic expeditions. He may have heard the acclamations which greeted the victorious monarch as he re-entered his capital, and listened to the first singing of that song of triumph, which was afterwards engraved on the walls of the great temple of Karnak.[1]

"Pharaoh is a jackal, which rushes leaping through the Hittite land ;
He is a grim lion, frequenting the hidden paths of all regions ;
He is a powerful bull with a pair of sharpened horns.
Pharaoh has stricken the Asiatics down to the ground ;
He has overthrown the Khita ; he has slain their princes."

The military glories of Egypt, thus revived by the monarch of the time, and echoed from mouth to mouth among men of all ranks and stations, occupying more or less the thoughts of all, and forming the general subject of conversation, would naturally stir the spirit of one so circumstanced as Moses, and would point out to him a path and an occupation, which none could regard as unworthy of him, which would give employment to all his energies, and might lead to the highest distinction. Promotion in the Egyptian army depended mainly, if not wholly upon merit. Moses would have that self-reliance which is

[1] Brugsch, "History of Egypt," vol. ii. p. 16.

characteristic of all truly great men; and he would feel that, if interest were needed, he would have in his mother a "friend at Court," on whom he might rely implicitly. Thus the military life would present itself to him in glowing colours, and he would feel drawn to it, rather than to any other.

Tradition here steps in and declares to us that the military life was the one actually adopted by Moses, and that it led him to the distinction which we may be sure he coveted. Both Josephus and Artapanus relate that, in a great war, which was waged between Egypt and Ethiopia, Moses commanded the Egyptian army, and led an expedition into Ethiopia, which was crowned with complete success. It seems impossible to suppose that the story, however fanciful in its details, is a pure fiction. We are estopped, moreover, from such a conclusion by the fact that St. Stephen, speaking before the Sanhedrim, mentioned it as a thing generally known, that Moses, before casting in his lot with his own nation, "was mighty in words and in deeds" (Acts vii. 22). A private individual could scarcely at the time be "mighty in deeds" otherwise than by following the career of arms and distinguishing himself in war. Moses, moreover, could not have marshalled the host of the Israelites as he did (Exod. xiii. 18), on their exodus from Egypt, without military knowledge and skill of an advanced kind. It seems therefore to be, on the whole, reasonable to conclude that during the space of nearly twenty years, which must have intervened between the termination of his university training, at about the age of twenty, and his flight into Midian, when he was "fully forty" (Acts vii. 23), Moses was engaged in the Egyptian military service, first learning the trade of a soldier, and then exercising it, originally in the lower, and ultimately in the higher, grades.

The life of a soldier, in its earlier stages, was one of considerable hardship. "At an early age, the youth destined for the profession of arms was sent to the military school or barracks; and his miseries there are described by a contemporary of Ramesses II., as also the additional ones of the warrior of a chariot, who underwent instruction in taking to pieces and re-adjusting his chariot, and driving it."[1] The importance of drill was fully recognized, and the young soldier was carefully instructed by the drill-sergeant for months, until he acquired complete proficiency. To keep step exactly, to carry arms in

[1] Dr. S. Birch in Wilkinson's "Ancient Egyptians," vol. i. p. 187.

exactly the same way, to dress the line to perfection, to move all as one man, to fire volleys of arrows at a signal all at once, were among the lessons to be learnt; and the drill-sergeant had power to enforce his instructions with a stick, though he would scarcely venture to use it when drilling a young officer of the rank of Moses. Even after drill was over, the recruit was not left to himself; severe exercise was required of him, and (according to Diodorus Siculus) even Sesostris was obliged, like the other recruits who were trained with him, to run a distance of above twenty miles every morning before breakfast.[1] If for "twenty" we substitute "two," the fact may have been as stated. Athletic sports and games formed also a part of the soldiers' training, and mock-fights, wrestling, leaping, cudgelling, and numerous feats of strength and agility, were constantly practised under the superintendence of skilled persons. After the earlier drill was completed, there was a special training for the chariot service, the chariot warrior having to learn how to mount into the chariot and descend from it while it was in motion, how to manage the steeds, in case any chance deprived him of his charioteer, and even how to take his chariot to pieces and put it together again.

If Seti I. was, as we have supposed, the Pharaoh who began the severe oppression, the youth and early manhood of Moses must have fallen into the period of the joint reign of Seti with his son, the Great Ramesses.[2] These monarchs were engaged, separately or conjointly, in a continued series of military expeditions. Invasion from the Hittites was feared, and while strong defensive measures were taken against it, a hugh wall being built to protect the north-eastern frontier, and "store-cities" constructed (Exod. i. 2) as military magazines, where arms and food might be accumulated, it was also thought most prudent to carry the war into the enemy's country, and to prevent him from marching his troops beyond his borders by giving him ample employment for them at home. We cannot say whether or no Moses fleshed his maiden sword in these conflicts. On the one hand, Josephus certainly writes as if he thought that the Ethio-

[1] Diod. Sic. i. 53.

[2] Seti associated Ramesses when he was ten years old, probably in his own eleventh or twelfth year. They reigned conjointly after this for eighteen or twenty years. Moses was probably born about the fifth or sixth year of Seti.

pian expedition was the first one in which Moses was engaged. On the other, it seems incredible that he should have been selected for a post of the highest importance at a time of extreme danger, whether the selection was made by the king himself of his own free will, or whether it was enjoined upon him by the priests, if he was an untried officer, wholly undistinguished, not known to possess any, even the smallest, military talent. Neither the king nor the priests can be supposed to have regarded Moses at this time as possessing superhuman powers, and therefore sure to succeed against an enemy by the Divine aid that would be vouchsafed him. Moses had as yet exhibited no such powers. He can only have been selected because he was believed to be a good general. Whence had that belief arisen? To us it appears that the only possible answer is this—he had exhibited courage, conduct, and the other qualities necessary for a commander, in other previous wars; and these, if he lived at the time which we have ventured to assign to him, would almost certainly be the Hittite wars of Seti, or of his son Ramesses.

The circumstances of the Ethiopian expedition, according to Josephus, were the following:—The Ethiopians, neighbours of the Egyptians upon the south, were in the habit of making inroads into their territory, and ravaging it from time to time. After a while they provoked the Egyptians to retaliate, and the latter marched an army into the land of the Ethiopians, to punish them for their insolence. But the Ethiopians gathered their forces together, and, engaging the Egyptians in the open field, completely defeated them, slaughtering a vast number, and forcing the rest to make a hasty and disgraceful retreat into their own country. It was now the turn of the Ethiopians to take the offensive. Following up the flying foe, they crossed the border, and, not content with ravaging, proceeded to seize and occupy large portions of Southern Egypt. The inhabitants did not venture on resistance; and, little by little, the invaders crept on towards the north, till they reached Memphis, and even the Mediterranean coast, without a single city having held out against their attack. Reduced to the depths of despair, the Egyptians had recourse to their oracular shrines, and inquired of them what it would be best for them to do. The reply given by the oracles, *i.e.* by the priests, who had the control of them, was—"Use the Hebrew as your helper." No one doubted that by "the Hebrew" was meant Moses, or that the "help" to be

required of him was that he should take the conduct of the war. Moses accordingly was invested with the sole command, and at the head of the Egyptian troops he marched into the enemy's country, got rid of the serpents which infested it by an importation of ibises, and defeated the army which was sent against him in a decisive battle. He then went on, and took city by city, everywhere overcoming the resistance that was offered to him, and slaying large numbers of the enemy. His troops, whom their reverses had disheartened, took courage so soon as they found that their new general could lead them to victory, and showed themselves excellent soldiers, ready to endure alike toil and danger. Penetrating at last to the very heart of the country, they laid siege to the capital, Saba, afterwards called Meroë, which lay on the Nile, almost surrounded by a bend of the river, and further guarded by a strong wall and by the two streams of the Astaboras and the Astacus. Numerous assaults were made on the defences without any result, though the gallantry of Moses and his cleverness were alike conspicuous; until at last the king's daughter, Tharbis, attracted by his doughty deeds, fell in love with him, and persuaded her father to come to terms with his assailants. It was agreed that the city should be surrendered on condition that Moses made Tharbis his wife, and that a treaty of peace should at the same time be concluded between the two nations on terms that are not stated. The agreement was carried out: the marriage between Moses and Tharbis was celebrated; and the Hebrew general, with his army, returned to Egypt in triumph.[1]

There are many points in this narrative which the critical historian reasonably rejects or questions. First, the power of Ethiopia at the time is greatly over-stated, the conquest of Egypt city by city, the fall of Memphis, and the approach of the invader to the Mediterranean Sea, being apparently taken from the actual history of six centuries later, when more than one Ethiopian conqueror humiliated Egypt in the way described. Next, the episode of the serpents and the ibises is plainly an embellishment, since ibises do not need to be imported into Ethiopia, where they are as common as in Egypt, and since in no country have serpents ever been known to be so numerous as seriously to impede the march of an army. Further, the

[1] Josephus, "Ant. Jud." ii. 10. Compare Artapanus in the "Fragm. Hist. Gr." of C. Müller, vol. iii. p. 220, Fr. 14.

Egyptian successes are probably as much exaggerated as the previous successes of the Ethiopians, since there is no appearance in the monuments of the Egyptian authority having ever been extended into the region mentioned, that where the Nile is joined by the tributaries which flow into it from the Abyssinian highlands. The manner, moreover, in which the war ended, and the marriage between Moses and Tharbis, are probably fictions, nothing else being known of Tharbis, and Moses being free to marry Zipporah not long afterwards.

But the exaggerations and the embellishments do not affect the general credit of the narrative—or at any rate of that which is of most importance in it—the elevation of Moses to the position of commander-in-chief of an Egyptian army at a time of danger, his conduct of a campaign against the Ethiopians, and the successful issue of his expedition. These points seem worthy of our belief, since it is scarcely conceivable that they should be pure inventions, and yet be related as facts by two authors of repute, one a Jew, having access to the archives of his nation, and well versed in its traditions; the other a Greek of Alexandria, likely to be familiar with Egyptian no less than with Jewish records.

CHAPTER VI.

THE GREAT DECISION.

Prospects of Moses after the Ethiopian expedition—His leaning towards his brethren — His "tour of inspection" — His remonstrances in high quarters ineffectual—Two possible courses open to him—The great decision—Moses casts in his lot with his brethren—His efforts to help them—His hasty homicide—His danger—His flight eastward—His arrival in Midian.

MOSES had returned from Ethiopia covered with glory. Whatever enmities or jealousies he may previously have aroused must have died away, or hid themselves, when it had to be generally acknowledged that the whole country was beholden to him and owed him a debt of gratitude. A tempting prospect of court favour, high employments, sounding titles, and rich emoluments, must have lain before him. In Egypt the Court was apt to accumulate its rewards on the favourite of the time being, and to think no amount of seemingly incompatible offices ill-bestowed upon the man who was recognized as deserving. An individual, named Ptah-ases, who lived under the old empire, was at one and the same time prophet of Phthah, of Sokari, and of Athor, priest of the temple of Sokari, and of that of Phthah at Memphis, prophet of Ra-Harmachis, of Ma, and of Horus, as well as overseer of the public granaries, royal secretary, chief of the mines, and "chief of the house of bronze."[1] A subject under the last Ramesses held in combination the offices of high-priest of Ammon at Thebes, chief of Upper and Lower Egypt, royal son of Kush, fan-bearer on the right hand of the king, chief architect,

[1] De Rougé, "Recherches sur les Monuments des six premières Dynasties," pp. 68–72.

and administrator of the granaries.[1] The system of pluralities was an established one, and was rendered possible by the separation of emoluments from duties, the nominal holder receiving the high stipends attached to the several offices, while such duties as they involved were discharged by ill-paid deputies. Moses might have confidently looked forward to some such position under Ramesses II. as Ptah-ases had held under Aseskaf, or as Her-hor afterwards held under the last Ramesses, had he been content to make no change in the character of his life, but simply to continue in the rank and condition in which the circumstances of his birth and breeding had, without any effort of his own, placed him.

But underneath the smooth current of his life hitherto—a life of alternate luxury at the Court, and comparative hardness in the camp and in the discharge of his military duties—there had lurked, from childhood to youth, from youth to manhood, a secret discontent, perhaps a secret ambition. Moses, amid all his Egyptian surroundings, had never forgotten, had never wished to forget, that he was a Hebrew. The tale that in his earlier infancy he had refused the milk of Egyptian nurses, and starved himself till he could suck nutriment from a Hebrew breast,[2] though a pure myth, is valuable, as indicative of his unceasing attachment to the race from which he was sprung. The more credible tradition that, while at Heliopolis, he always performed his prayers, according to the custom of his fathers, outside the walls of the city, in the open air, turning towards the sun-rising,[3] shows that he refused to conceal, under trying circumstances, either his nationality or his religion. To the honour of the Hebrew people it must be said that they have at all times, and under all circumstances, unless perhaps sometimes where persecution was the cruellest, made open avowal of their faith, and submitted to the consequences of such avowal without shrinking. Moses had done this, but as yet he had not thrown in his lot with his people—he had remained an outsider—he had not even, it would seem, made himself acquainted with their actual condition, or had more than a vague knowledge of their sufferings. But the time was now come when he felt it incumbent on him to do more. He had attained a position of some authority. His voice had become of some weight in the counsels

[1] Brugsch, "History of Egypt," vol. ii. p. 191.

[2] Josephus, "Ant. Jud." ii. 9, § 5. [3] Josephus, "Contr. Apion.," ii. 2.

of the State. He might expect that any representations which he might make would command attention.

So he resolved on a tour of inspection. "He went out unto his brethren, and looked upon their burdens" (Exod. ii. 11). Alone, or accompanied by a few attendants, he passed through the portion of Egypt occupied by the Israelites, and by personal eye-witness made himself familiar, in every detail, with the condition of his people. And what was that condition? One portion were working in the brickfields. Some were digging the stiff clay out of the hot pits, where no shade was possible, and no breath of air could touch them. Some were kneading the stiff clay into suppleness with their hands or with their feet, and mixing it with the straw which was required to bind together the soft material. Some were shaping the clay into bricks by means of a mould or form, into which the material was pressed, and from which it was subsequently turned out in the shape desired. Some were carrying heavy burdens of bricks upon their backs, either in baskets or by means of a yoke slung across the shoulders. Finally, some were arranging the bricks into stacks, where the drying would be completed, and whence they would be carried off by those employed in building.

Another portion utilized the bricks which had been made by their brethren. The "store-cities" of Pithom and Ramesses (Raamses), with their huge walls, their magazines and granaries, their temple-enclosures, their streets and squares, their mansions and residences, were the work of Israelite hands, which dug the foundations, emplaced the bricks, spread the mortar, and gradually raised up the walls and buildings to the prescribed height. Taking our stand on the mound of Tel-es-Maskoutah, and looking round about on the great massive wall enclosing it, 940 yards long, eight yards broad, and from fifteen to twenty feet high, on the tangle of store-chambers and other buildings spread over it, and the temple occupying its south-western angle, we see the actual works in which the Israelites of Moses' time were engaged, and in our wanderings may stand where he stood to consider, and weigh in the scales of truth, the heaviness of the burdens imposed upon them. The work of the builders was scarcely so severe as that of the brick-makers. It is, however, described as both unhealthy and unpleasant by Egyptian authors. "I tell you also of the builder of precincts," says one; "disease seizes on him (literally, 'tastes him'), for he is always

in draughts of air; he builds in slings, tied to the pillars of the house. His hands are worn with labour; his clothes are out of order; he washes himself but once [in the day]; for bread he eats his fingers."[1]

A section of the Israelites, if we may credit Philo,[2] was employed in digging canals. In all countries this is heavy and dreary work; but in Egypt it is not only wearisome, but also unhealthy. To dig for long hours under a blazing sun, with the feet in wet mud or in water, is trying to any man: to ill-fed and ill-cared-for labourers it is often fatal. Neco, we are told, caused the death of 120,000 men by his attempt to re-open the canal between the Nile and the Red Sea.[3] Ten thousand men perished under Mehemet Ali in the construction of the canal of Alexandria. The great work of M. Lesseps is believed to have proved fatal to a much larger number. Where deaths are numerous, cases of severe suffering short of death are countless; and we may conclude therefore that Moses would see, in the condition of such Israelites as were engaged in canal-digging, an intensified form of the "service with rigour," which prevailed generally.

One other occupation is mentioned as included in the oppression of Israel; viz., labour "in the field"—employment, that is, in agriculture. At first sight, there might seem to be nothing very severe in this, since agricultural employment is the lot of the bulk of mankind everywhere. But there is an enormous difference between the kind of work done by free labourers in a land of liberty, and that exacted from forced labourers in countries where slavery is a recognized institution. Negro emancipation in the West Indies and in the Southern States of America, was brought about very much through the representations made by eye-witnesses of the severe drudgery and toil actually imposed on the slaves employed in the cultivation of the cotton-plant and the sugar-cane. In Egypt, as in most other countries, slaves worked under the lash. "The little labourer having a field," says an Egyptian writer of about Moses' time, "passes his life among the beasts; he is worn down for vines and figs, to make his kitchen of what his fields have. His clothes are a heavy weight; he is bound as a forced labourer; if he goes forth into the air, he suffers—he is bastinadoed with

[1] "Records of the Past," vol. viii. pp. 149, 150.
[2] "Vit. Mosis," p. 85. [3] Herodotus, ii. 158.

stick on his legs—perhaps he seeks to save himself; but shut against him is the hall of every house, closed are the chambers."[1] Any stoppage, any cessation from toil, any rest, such as we see our own labourers freely taking as often as they require it, is punished, where the serf works under a task-master armed with a whip or stick, by a sharp blow on the legs, or arms, or back, which often raises a wheal or brings the blood to the surface. Blows may be infrequent; but the fear of a blow is perpetual; and the labour is thus constant, unceasing, such as taxes the strength beyond endurance, the fear of the stick causing the labourer to work till he drops. Then, probably, he is kicked, and left lying on the ground in the hot sunshine, until he can crawl home to the wretched shed or cabin which is his resting-place at night.

When Moses "went out unto his brethren, and looked upon their burdens" (Exod. ii. 11), such were the sights that he would see, such the images that he would carry back from his tour of inspection, burnt into his memory, to be reproduced in his thoughts over and over again, as he lay on his couch of down in his apartments at the Court. And then would arise in his mind the question—Could he do nothing to help his brethren—to ameliorate their condition—to lessen their sufferings? Probably the first course that would suggest itself would be remonstrance with those who were at the head of affairs—a representation to them of the guilt which they incurred, according to the laws of Egyptian morality, in conniving at the cruelties which he had witnessed. Egyptian morality required men to "resist the oppressor, to put a stop to violence, to shield the weak against the strong," to be kind-hearted and generally benevolent. Moses, if he occupied the high position which we have supposed, may have expected that his words would have weight, that attention would be paid to his remonstrances, that, if he was not allowed to direct, he might at any rate be permitted to modify, the policy of the empire. "Why," he might urge, "should the Israelites be singled out for suspicion and hatred? Were they not *his* brethren, and had not *he* shown unmistakably the good-will that animated him towards Egypt? What had they done to deserve their hard usage? Had they not been quiet subjects, useful servants of the king (Gen. xlvii. 6), an addition to the strength of Egypt?" But Moses would argue to minds blocked

[1] "Records of the Past," vol. viii. p. 149.

against his reasonings by prejudice, impervious to argument by reason of long-engrained prepossessions, and unaccustomed to changes of policy, unless when one dynasty was superseded by another (Exod. i. 8), and a "new king" introduced new modes of action. Thus, it would soon become plain to Moses that his words were making no impression on those who heard them, and that, if he was to be of any service to his brethren, he must adopt some other method.

But what method was possible? As an Egyptian, it was evident that he could do nothing. If he remained an Egyptian, if he clung to his Court life, if he maintained his position as the adopted son of a princess, he must be content to resign the hope of being ever his brethren's deliverer (Acts vii. 25), or of in any way ameliorating their life. The alternative was for him to cast in his lot with them, to make himself one of them, to ingratiate himself with them so that they should accept him as their leader, and then, when occasion offered, to put himself at their head, and break the Egyptian yoke from off their shoulders.

The time had arrived, as it arrives to most of us in the course of our careers on earth, to make the great decision, for God and conscience, or against them. On the one side were all the temptations that the world and the flesh can offer—first, "the treasures of Egypt" (Heb. xi. 26)—not the mere gold and silver that would naturally fall to his lot, if he lived on as a prince in the royal palace—but the luxury, the culture, the enjoyments of the Court—dainty fare, and grand banquets, and the charms of music, painting and statuary—and sports and hunting parties, fishing and fowling, the chase of the lion and the antelope—and soft sofas and luxurious couches, and rich apparel, and chains and collars, proofs of the king's good-will—and all the outward signs which mark off those on whom society smiles from the crowd of those who are of small account; and, secondly, beyond all these, "the pleasures of sin for a season" (Heb. xi. 25)—the seductive charms of a Court circle not over strict in its morals, the feasts that turned into orgies, the sacred rites that ended in debauchery—all these spread their tempting array before the lower nature of the prince, now in manhood's full vigour, and drew him towards the life of ease, of pleasure, of softness. On the other side were conscience, and honour, and natural affection, and patriotism, and that keen longing for the higher and the nobler life, which is an essential part of all great natures, and

makes itself felt in crises with an irresistible force. The path of self-sacrifice will always attract the heroic portion of humanity, and the choice of such men will always be "the choice of Hercules." "To scorn delights and live laborious days" is the instinctive resolve of every strong and noble character.

Moses is said to have made his choice "by faith" (Heb. xi. 23). Are we to gather from this that a revelation had been already made to him that he was Israel's destined deliverer, or is it only meant that he trusted God would bless his resolution to his own and his brethren's advantage, as godly men may always trust that their efforts will be blest, when with an honest and true heart they seek to do the best they can? Perhaps this latter view is the more probable, though the other has sometimes been taken. At any rate, whatever the ground of his trust, and whatever the reasons for his having delayed so long, Moses at length "by faith" made his choice, "refused to be called" any longer "the son of Pharaoh's daughter" (ver. 25), and "chose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God" (ver. 26). He quitted the palace, gave up whatever offices he held, returned probably to his father's house, and therein once more took up his abode, so making it clear to all that he renounced his Egyptian citizenship, and would henceforth only be known as one of the outcast Hebrews, one of the oppressed, down-trodden nation, which had for above forty years been suffering the bitterest and most cruel persecution.

But he was not long to continue in this retirement. With a heart burning with indignation at the wrongs of his countrymen, he went about the neighbourhood of Memphis, observing their treatment, perhaps remonstrating with those who ill-used them, and endeavouring to shame them into the adoption of milder methods. He may have been to some extent successful; but an occasion came when the oppressor turned a deaf ear to remonstrance, and persisted in his ill-usage of an unfortunate Hebrew labourer, despite all that Moses could say to him. Then the pent-up fire which was consuming him burst forth. Moses raised his hand and smote the Egyptian and slew him, It was a hasty and rash act, the result of a violent access of indignation, which made him strike with a force which he had not intended, and produced a result that he had not anticipated. The deed done could not be acknowledged and justified—it was necessary to conceal it. So Moses, after scraping a hole in the sand, which

in Egypt always creeps up to the edge of the cultivated ground, buried the corpse in it.

The homicide might have remained unknown, had not the Hebrew on whose behalf Moses had interfered informed his countrymen of the circumstances under which he had been rescued from the hands of his oppressor. We may well believe that he did this with no evil intent, but rather with the object of extolling his benefactor, and venting his own sense of obligation. But a secret once divulged ceases to be a secret; and it was not long before Moses found that his homicide was bruited abroad. "When he went out the second day, behold, two men of the Hebrews strove together; and he said unto him that did the wrong—Wherefore smitest thou thy fellow? And he said, Who made thee a prince and a judge over us? Intendest thou to kill me as thou killedst the Egyptian? And Moses feared, and said, Surely this thing is known" (Exod. ii. 13, 14). Known it was, and not only to his own people, but to the Egyptians also; and the Egyptians who heard it carried the news to the king, Ramesses II., who by this time was reigning alone. What the feelings of the monarch had been towards Moses hitherto is wholly uncertain, the hostility, the fear, and the envy ascribed to him by some writers being in a high degree improbable. Ramesses had gained too many victories himself to be jealous of a subject because he had been successful in a single expedition, and was far too confident in the security of his position to fear a rebellion against his authority. But such an act as that which Moses had perpetrated was an offence against the law, which could not well be condoned; and we cannot be surprised that the Pharaoh, when he heard of the thing, "sought to slay Moses" (Exod. ii. 15), or, at any rate, sought to have him arrested. His arrest would under the circumstances have been, beyond a doubt, followed by his execution; since he had no legal right to strike the Egyptian at all, and if a man unlawfully wounds another with malice prepense, and the consequences are fatal, he is held in all civilized countries to be guilty of a crime which may in strict justice be punished with death. Moses took a correct view of the situation, and "fled from the face of Pharaoh," feeling that his only chance of safety lay in making his escape from Egypt, and betaking himself to some country which was beyond the reach of the Egyptian influence. Treaties of extradition were not unknown at the period, but

they were rare and unusual. Once beyond the Egyptian border, he would easily reach a land where he would incur no risk of being surrendered or even demanded.

A fugitive from Egyptian justice, starting from Memphis, would almost necessarily set his face towards the east. He could not escape by travelling northward, for in that direction the dominion of the Egyptian monarch reached to the shores of the sea ; it was hopeless to proceed southward, for the frontier on that side was 700 miles away ; to the west was nothing but uninhabited sandy desert, without food, or water, or shade. The eastern desert was, on the contrary, to some extent peopled ; it had trees and wells in places, and thus was traversable ; though reckoned to Egypt, it was scarcely under Egyptian rule, and the writ of the Pharaoh scarcely ran in its recesses. Moses, having provided himself with a bag of meal and a water-bottle, would enter on the desert within a few hours of quitting Memphis, and would gradually thread its valleys, always making towards the east, until he passed the head of the Gulf of Suez, and found himself in Arabia. Even there, however, he was not wholly safe. The Egyptians in the time of Ramesses II. had permanent settlements in the Wady Magharah and at Sarabit-el-Khadim in the Sinaitic peninsula, where they worked the mines of copper and turquoise which then abounded in those districts. To communicate with these settlements they must have had a line of fortified posts, extending from their frontier at or near Suez to the valleys in which the mines were situated. It was the aim of Moses to place himself beyond the sphere of Egyptian influence altogether ; and to do this he had to reach the more eastern portion of the peninsula, a region at that time inhabited by the Midianites, and known as "the land of Midian" (Exod. ii. 15). The route which he took was probably very much the same as that by which he afterwards led the Israelites to mount Sinai. It ran nearly parallel with the eastern coast of the Gulf of Suez, but did not skirt the shore excepting for a short distance. It avoided the Egyptian posts and settlements, and brought the traveller, after the lapse of some weeks, to the vicinity of the Elanitic Gulf, or eastern arm of the Red Sea, which seems in early times to have been the proper country of the southern Midianites.

Having reached this remote district, weary, thirsty, and travel-stained, Moses sate himself down upon the margin of a well,

and sought to recruit his strength by a short rest. The well was one of considerable repute, so that it is called "*the* well" (Exod. ii. 15)—around it were "troughs," or tanks, prepared for the watering of their flocks by the Bedouin herdsmen of the neighbourhood. As Moses sate and contemplated the scene around him, a band of seven maidens drew near, bringing with them their father's flock, and began to draw water from the well, and to fill the troughs, a work in which Moses, with natural politeness, assisted them (Exod. ii. 19). But, as the animals were beginning to drink, and before they had half satisfied their thirst, some of the Bedouin herdsmen came up, and proceeded to drive the maidens and their flock away, in order to water their own beasts first. Then "the chivalrous spirit which had already broken forth" in Moses "on behalf of his oppressed countrymen, broke forth again on behalf of the oppressed maidens."[1] He "delivered" the maidens from the shepherds, drove them off by threats or blows, and enabled his protégées to complete their watering without further molestation. The brave action naturally led to the damsels' father inviting Moses into his tent, to "eat bread" with him, in the homely phrase of the time (Exod. ii. 20). And the acquaintance thus formed brought the wanderings of the fugitive to an end; for he was content to take service under the Midianite to whom chance had thus introduced him and to remain his dependent for a period, which St. Stephen roughly estimates (Acts vii. 30) at "forty years."

[1] Dean Stanley, in Smith's 'Dictionary of the Bible," vol. ii. p. 426.

CHAPTER VII.

MOSES IN MIDIAN.

Country occupied by the Midianites—Position of Reuel among them—Position of Moses—Character of the Sinaitic region—Desolation—Silence—Occasional sand-storms—Silence of the nights—Moses' life in the desert a preparation for his subsequent career—Few circumstances of his life known to us—Names of his sons and explanation of them—Egyptian story of Saneha illustrates this part of the history of Moses.

THE Midianites were a rich and a powerful people. A portion of them were settled in cities (Numb. xxxi. 10); but the greater number led a nomadic life, passing from district to district over a large extent of ground in continual search of fresh pastures for their flocks and herds. In the later life of Moses, their most important settlement was within the territory generally assigned to Moab, on the eastern and northern shores of the Dead Sea (Numb. xxiv. 1–4). Their tribes, however, did not confine themselves to this locality, but wandered as their fancy led them over the entire tract between Palestine and Egypt, while they spread also into Arabia Proper, occupying the eastern no less than the western coast of the Elanitic Gulf, and even building cities there.

At the time of the flight of Moses from Egypt, the Midianitish sheikh of most authority in the south-eastern portion of the Sinaitic peninsula was a certain Reuel or Raguel, who was at once priest and king of his tribe. This Reuel was the father of the maidens whom Moses had championed, and the person who had received him into his tent, and with whom he took service. It does not at all militate against this view of the rank of Reuel that his daughters watered their father's flock; for, in

the simplicity of ancient times, chiefs' daughters, and even princesses, condescended to such an occupation (Gen. xxiv. 15–20). Reuel's position was like that of Melchisedek (Gen. xiv. 18), only that Melchisedek was a city king, while Reuel exercised his authority over a tribe of nomads. He was the chief man in the parts to which Moses had come, and it was a fortunate circumstance for the latter that his wanderings had conducted him to the residence of so important a person. Reuel's friendliness at once placed him above want, and secured him a life of peace, freedom, and dignity.

It has been said that Moses was Reuel's "slave,"[1] but this is entirely to misapprehend his position. He was a refugee whom an Arab sheikh had taken under his protection and received into his household out of compassion and kindness. He naturally placed his services at the disposal of his benefactor, and employed himself as his benefactor suggested. But he continued a free agent. He might at any time have resumed his wanderings if it had so pleased him, or have transferred his services elsewhere. But self-interest and affection alike retained him where he was. Reuel after a time gave him one of his daughters to wife, and having thus become a member of the tribe and of the family, it was natural that he should make his permanent home in the tents of his new kindred. His employment was, of course, shepherding, as that was the general occupation of the tribe; and he probably moved with the tribe at different periods of the year into different parts of the peninsula.

The pastoral life of the desert is wonderfully peaceful and wonderfully elevating, more especially when the desert has the character which attaches to the region in which the lot of Moses was now cast. All around is stillness. Great bare mountains, scarred and seamed, raise their bald heads into the azure sky, casting broad shadows at morn and eve over the plains or valleys at their base, at noonday searched and scorched by the almost vertical sun, which penetrates into every recess and spreads everywhere a glare of quivering light, except where some overhanging rock casts a grateful but scanty shade. The herbage in the valleys and plains is short, but sweet and nourishing. Trees are rare; but low shrubs and bushes, chiefly camel-thorn and acacia, abound; while here and there a clump, or even a grove, of palms affords the eye a welcome variety. The moun-

[1] Stanley, in Smith's "Dictionary of the Bible," vol. ii. p. 426.

tains "combine grandeur with desolation"[1]—in this respect, "their scenery is absolutely unrivalled. They are the Alps of Arabia, but the Alps planted in the desert, and therefore stripped of all the clothing which goes to make up our notions of Swiss or English mountains; stripped of the variegated drapery of oak, and birch, and pine, and fir; of moss, and grass, and fern, which to landscapes of European hills are almost as essential as the rocks and peaks themselves. Of all the charms of Switzerland, the one which most impresses a traveller recently returned from the East, is the breadth and depth of its verdure. The very name of "Alp" is strictly applied only to the green pasture lands enclosed by rocks or glaciers—a sight in the European Alps so common, in these Arabian Alps so wholly unknown. The absence of verdure, it need hardly be said, is due to the absence of water—to those perennial streams which are at once the creation and the life of every other mountain district."

And the silence, partly owing to this absence of running water, is complete. No song of birds enlivens the Sinaitic solitudes, no hum of insect life breaks the deathlike stillness. The bleat of a goat is heard at the distance of half a mile. Now and then a mysterious sound, half ghostly, half musical, suddenly fills the air, and then passes away, leaving the stillness stiller than before. It is caused by some slip of sand upon the mountain-side, or by some expansion or contraction of the rocks through change of temperature. Otherwise, the silence is unbroken. Thunder and lightning, storm and tempest, are rare visitants of the region; but when they occur, they have a marked character of their own; and it is one of peculiar impressiveness.

The Sinaitic peninsula, though composed chiefly of rock and gravel, is in certain localities liable to sand-storms. Dean Stanley tells us of one that he experienced, which lasted all day. "Imagine," he says, "all distant objects entirely lost to view, the sheets of sand fleeting along the surface of the desert like streams of water; the whole air filled, though invisibly, with a tempest of sand, driving in your face like sleet. Imagine the caravan toiling against this, the Bedouins, each with his shawl thrown completely over his head, half of the riders sitting backwards; the camels, meantime, thus virtually left without guidance, though from time to time throwing their long necks

[1] Stanley, "Sinai and Palestine," p. 13.

sideways, to avoid the blast, yet moving straight onwards with a painful sense of duty truly edifying to behold. . . . Through this tempest, this roaring and driving tempest, we rode on the whole day." [1]

Such scenes, however, are rare. For the most part, the Sinaitic region is one of unvarying calm and stillness. By day the sun rises through a dull haze in the east, then springs into a clear and speckless sky, through which it slowly moves hour after hour in constant unclouded majesty, bathing the earth in an unvarying flood of light, until, towards evening, it begins to sink into the purple haze that lies along the west, and, turning it for a few minutes into an ensanguined sea, drops down below the horizon and is hid. Night at once closes in—the glow in the west rapidly fades away—darkness descends upon the face of the earth, and with darkness a hush of silence, even deeper than that of the day. One by one the stars come out in the solemn, blue-black sky, till all their hosts are marshalled, but only to look with many-coloured eyes—yellow, and red, and white, and violet—without noise and without motion on the sleeping earth beneath them. Even when the yellow glory of the moon rises above the horizon and walks, or rather floats, in the softness of the limpid firmament, there is little stir of life, or sound, or movement. Bats perhaps come out and flutter their wings; the cry of a hyæna or a jackal is heard in the distance; but such sights and sounds are "few and far between," and when they occur, seem rather to intensify the stillness than break it.

The pastoral life is always one that favours contemplation. In the East, the shepherd rises with the early dawn, and leads forth his flock from the rough sheep-folds in which they have passed the night, going before them, and guiding them to the pastures whereon he intends them to browse during the ensuing day. The docile flock follow him, and seldom need a word of chiding; for they soon understand whither he is about to take them, and know they may trust to his guidance. When he has brought them to the spot where he intends them to graze, they scatter themselves, while he seats himself and rests on some convenient knoll, or bank, or stone, whence he can command a view of the beasts under his care, and see that they do not wander away too far. He has but little to do, except to maintain this watch, which he does almost mechanically, while his

[1] Stanley, "Sinai and Palestine," pp. 67, 68.

thoughts go far a-field, imagining the future, or recalling the past, or straying into those speculative inquiries concerning God, and man, and nature, and the mystery of life, which have always had charms for Oriental minds, and given them unending occupation. Moses could perhaps not be always quite alone while he was shepherding; for as a head herdsman, to whom a considerable portion of the flock of a great sheikh was intrusted, he would have subordinates to help him in his task, and would have to give them orders and see to their execution. But still there would be long hours during each day when practically he would be by himself, face to face with nature and with God, unconsciously drinking in the influences of his surroundings, gaining mental strength and vigour from his contact with the simplicity and solemnity of nature. At the same time he would be disciplining his body by spare and simple meals, by much walking in the open air, by sleep on the ground, short nights, and early risings; while he invigorated his whole character by communing with himself and with God, by deep "searchings of heart," sharp questionings of conscience, reflections upon his past life, repentance of his sins, and good resolutions with respect to the future. A long spell of solitude, or comparative solitude, is of the highest value for the formation of a high, a noble, and a commanding personality. Elijah's life was chiefly passed in the wilds of Gilead, far away from the haunts of men. John the Baptist "was in the deserts" from the time of his early childhood "till the day of his showing unto Israel" (Luke i. 80), when he was fully thirty years of age. St. Paul, after his conversion and baptism, withdrew for three years into Arabia (Gal. i. 17, 18). The saints of God generally have found the advantage of long periods of retirement from the bustle of active life, and have refreshed and recruited their souls by removing into deserts, or hermitages, or convents, and there passing months or years.

Had Moses during these years any presentiment of his future, and did he consciously seek to prepare himself for it? Our answer must be negative. Unless Divinely warned, Moses could have no expectation of what was about to befall him, and there is no reason to think that he was Divinely warned. When the time for his call came, it came upon him as a new thing, utterly strange to his thoughts, utterly unexpected—"Who am I that I should go unto Pharaoh?" (Exod. iii. 11). No! He was not

preparing himself during these many years for the leadership of a difficult and dangerous enterprise which would tax all his powers to the utmost; but the providence of God was preparing him for it. Divine foreknowledge, which sees the end from the beginning, and knows the best means to employ, was directing and shaping his life in the way that was most apt to fit him for the coming enterprise, to strengthen his resolution, to ripen his powers, to draw him into that constant close communion with God which is the only sure support and stay of the soul under the strain and pressure of extreme difficulties. As the healthy air of the desert, pure and dry, untainted by human defilements, braced his physical nature, so that when he died at the age of one hundred and twenty years, "his eye was not dim, neither his natural force abated" (Deut. xxxiv. 7), so the spiritual atmosphere in which he lived kept his soul braced for doing and for suffering, qualifying him for his high post and for those arduous duties which would have overtaxed the strength of any one unsustained by heavenly influences.

In the quiet round of unceasing daily duties, the life of Moses must have slipped almost imperceptibly away. With a reticence characteristic of the truly great, who are almost always humble-minded, he passes over with scant notice the "forty years" of his Midianite sojourn, allowing us but a few fleeting glimpses either of his daily life or of his thoughts and feelings. From slight and scattered notices we gather: first, that after a while Reuel died, and was succeeded in the headship of the tribe by his son, Jether, or Jethro, who continued in the priestly office held by his father, and was a monotheist, worshipping the same God as Moses with sacrifice and praise (Exod. xviii. 10–12). Jethro would thus be Moses' brother-in-law,[1] not his "father-in-law," as the Authorized Version makes him; but, as head of the tribe, would hold towards Moses almost the same position as his father. Moses continued to "keep the flock," which had been Reuel's and was now Jethro's, in the wilderness of Sinai. He moved from one part of the wilderness to another (Exod. iii. 1), according to the time of year or the condition of the pasturage. His home was probably a tent of the better class;

[1] So Ranke ("Pentateuch," ii. 8) and others. It is generally allowed that the word חֹתֵן, like the Greek γαμβρός, may mean "father-in-law," "brother-in-law," or "son-in-law."

and here he dwelt, near the sheep-folds, with his Midianitish wife, the Zipporah whom Reuel had given to him in marriage soon after he arrived in his country (Exod. ii. 21). Zipporah bore him two sons, but apparently no other children. It is in recording the names of these two sons, the props of his house, that Moses gives the only indications, which he allows to appear, of the feelings that stirred his heart during his exile. To his firstborn, borne to him by Zipporah while the grief of being an exile was still fresh to him and rankled in his mind, he gave the name of Gershom—"a stranger there"—"for he said, I have been a stranger in a strange land." Surely there is pathos here! Months, years have gone by, he is welcomed, honoured, received into a chief's family, trusted, loved; but he still feels that he is among strangers, not among "his own people," far from parents, and brother, and sister, and kinsfolk, and countrymen, and old friends—a stranger, an alien. The land is foreign to him. It is not the land on which his eyes have been accustomed to look from infancy to youth, and from youth to middle age. All is new and strange in it. How different the awful blood-red rocks from the green plains of the Delta! How unlike the parched and dried-up watercourses to the abounding stream of the Nile! It is a strange land, and a strange people. What sharper contrast possible than that between the elaborate, formalized, thoroughly artificial civilization of Egypt, and the simple, unsophisticated—it may be, somewhat rude life of the desert? One a land of cities, and temples, and palaces, and canals, and ships, and active bustle—the other calm, silent, without buildings, almost without inhabitants! Without any longing for "the fleshpots of Egypt," or any undue hankering after the pleasures and treasures (Heb. xi. 25, 26) which he had foregone, Moses may well have felt the sadness of exile, and have regretted the separation from all that he had for so many years held dear.

The name which Moses gave to his second-born was Eli-ezer —"my God hath holpen me." Now has come a reaction in his feelings. He no longer complains, but rejoices. He has become conscious that in his former querulousness there was ingratitude to the God who had ordered all his life, had saved him in infancy from an untimely death, had caused him to be cared for and educated, had preserved him from the perils of war, and had finally delivered him from the Pharaoh who sought his life.

He named his second son Eli-ezer, "because," he said, "the God of my father was mine help, and delivered me from the sword of Pharaoh" (Exod. xviii. 4). The Pharaoh had "sought to slay him" (Exod, ii. 15), when he fled, had probably sent emissaries after him, to arrest him, or kill him if he resisted. But God had been his helper—not by his own strength, or caution, or wisdom, or cunning, had he escaped the danger that threatened him, but by God's goodness and protecting care. The recognition of God's goodness in the past must have thrown the light of hope upon the future, and have enabled the exile to take a more cheerful view of his position and prospects than he had taken previously—must have, at any rate, made him content to bear his burdens, such as they were, patiently, and leave the future to be determined for him by the will of the most gracious and All-wise Ruler of all things.

There is among the Egyptian novelettes a tale which offers, in some respects, a curious parallel to this portion of the history of Moses. It is called "The Story of Saneha."[1] Saneha, a courtier in the time of Usurtasen I., having conceived a disgust at the Court life, and a desire for a position of greater independence and freedom, sets out secretly upon his travels without the leave of the Pharaoh. With some difficulty he passes the Eastern boundary, and proceeds on foot through the desert. There he suffers agonies from thirst, until his wants are relieved by a native of the region which he is traversing, a keeper of cattle, who, though recognizing him as an Egyptian (Exod. ii. 19), supplies him both with water and milk. Saneha continues his journeying, and is brought on "from place to place," till he reaches Atima (Edom). There the chief of the country, or of one adjoining, sends for him, receives him into his household, questions him concerning his past, and ends by giving him his daughter in marriage. "He placed me over his children," Saneha says; "he married me to his eldest daughter; he endowed me with a part of his land, of the choicest which belonged to him." Saneha enjoyed now the liberty which he had desired. "Licence," he says, "was conferred on me of

[1] The "Story of Saneha," first published by Lepsius in his "Denkmäler" (vol. vi. pls. 104 *et seq.*), has been translated into French by M. Chabas ("Les Papyrus Hiératiques de Berlin, recits d'il y a quatre mille ans," Paris, 1863), and into English by Mr. C. W. Goodwin ("Records of the Past," vol. vi. pp. 135–150).

going wherever I chose." In this honourable and prosperous condition Saneha tells us that he "passed many years." During this period "children were born to him; they became strong, each one a valiant ruler over his servants." A still higher degree of prosperity follows—the king, or sheikh, "was satisfied with him, loved him, made him the chief of his children." But, while thus externally flourishing, and surrounded by all that the heart of man commonly desires, Saneha was discontented, unhappy. Nothing could be a compensation to him for what he had left in his own land. So, after a time, his longing is to return home, to see once more the land where he was born. And the result for which he so ardently longs is brought about. A way is opened for his return to Egypt, the sheikh gives his consent, and the fugitive returns to the Pharaoh's court, and is once more numbered among his counsellors. It is not pretended that the parallel between this tale and the history of Moses is close; but the position of Moses is illustrated in several points, and the movements of a refugee from the Pharaonic court, and the possibility of a return after long years of absence, are put before us in a lively and graphic way, which gives them a certain interest.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE RETURN TO EGYPT.

Events in Egypt during the absence of Moses—Peace made with the Hittites—Peace cemented by an intermarriage—Attention of Ramesses II. turned to the construction of great works—Increased sufferings of the Israelites—Death of Ramesses II.—His character—Menephthah continues the oppression—God's appearance to Moses in the bush—His call—His resistance to the call—The punishment of his resistance—The ground of it—Relations of Moses with Jethro—He is allowed to depart, but lingers—Picture of his departure—His dangerous illness and its consequences—His meeting with Aaron.

DURING the absence of Moses in Midian—a period of between thirty and forty years, according to the Jewish tradition—the oppression of the children of Israel in Egypt had continued, and had become more and more severe. Ramesses II. was upon the throne, ruling singly after his father's decease, and applying all his vast energies to the construction of enormous works, partly ostentatious, partly defensive, in various parts of his empire. The days of his great military expeditions were over. He had, after a long and bloody struggle, terminated his differences with the Hittites by a solemn treaty and an intermarriage. An agreement had been drawn up and signed, and engraved upon a plate of silver, whereby Khitasir, his great antagonist, and himself covenanted to be thenceforth friends and allies—they, and their sons, and their sons' sons, for ever. The high contracting powers were in all respects placed on terms of equality. Khitasir, the puissant, son of Marasar, the puissant, and grandson of Saplal, the puissant, undertook to be a good friend and brother to Ramesses-Meriamen, the puissant,

son of Seti-Menephthah, the puissant, and grandson of Ramesses-Ramenpehti, the puissant, and Ramesses-Meriamen, the puissant, &c., undertook to be a good friend and brother to Khitasir, the puissant, &c. Khitasir engaged under no circumstances to invade the land of Egypt, to carry away anything from it, for ever; and Ramesses engaged under no circumstances to invade the land of Khita, to carry away anything from it, for ever. Each bound himself, if the other were attacked, either to come in person, or to send his forces to the other's assistance. Each pledged himself to the extradition both of criminals fleeing from justice and of any other subjects wishing to transfer their allegiance. Each, at the same time, stipulated for an amnesty of offences in the case of all persons thus surrendered. The treaty was placed under the protection of the gods of the two countries, who were invoked respectively to protect observers and punish infringers of it.[1]

Some years later the friendship was cemented by an intermarriage. Ramesses seems to have proposed and the Hittite monarch to have given his consent to the connection. The daughter of Khitasir, who on her marriage exchanged her Hittite name for the Egyptian one of Ur-maa-nefru-ra, was conducted by Khitasir himself, "clad in the dress of his country," to the palace of the Egyptian monarch; the nuptials were celebrated; Ur-maa-nefru-ra was proclaimed as Queen Consort of her royal spouse, and Khitasir, after receiving hospitable entertainment, returned to his own land.[2] The two contiguous empires were thus brought into perfect harmony and agreement; peace was secured, at any rate for some considerable space; and Ramesses was able to turn his thoughts to those gigantic works which mainly occupied his later years.

These works were of various kinds. Some were temples, either built in the ordinary way of huge blocks of hewn stone, or else carved out of the solid rock, as that of Ipsambul in Nubia. Others were palaces for his own abode, with corridors, and courts, and pillared halls, and huge colossi representing his own august person, and internally ornamented with coloured bas-reliefs commemorative of his own actions. A considerable number were cities, either begun by his father and completed by himself, or entirely of his own construction, as Pa-Tum

[1] "Records of the Past," vol. iv. pp. 27-32.
[2] Brugsch, "History of Egypt," vol. ii. p. 75.

(or Pithom), Pa-Ramessu (Raamses), Pa-Phthah, Pa-Ra, Pa-Ammon, &c. Among them were also his Great Canal, and his Great Wall, the former connecting the Nile with the Red Sea, and running from near Bubastis by way of Pithom to the Bitter Lakes, and thence to Suez—the other carried from a point near Pelusium across the Isthmus to the inner recess of the western arm of the Red Sea. It was in the execution of these works that the Israelites suffered the main portion of their afflictions. Pithom and Pa-Ramessu, begun by Seti, but completed by Ramesses II., were certainly the work of their hands; and they were not improbably employed also in building the other cities. Or, if they did not build them, they at any rate made the bricks for them. And they probably were largely employed in the construction of the Great Canal and the Great Wall. The Great Wall skirted the edge of their special country, Goshen, which lay along the eastern frontier, between the Pelusiac branch of the Nile and the Desert; the Great Canal was in their immediate neighbourhood, and passed close to Pithom—one of the cities which they are expressly stated to have built. Ramesses had, no doubt, an enormous command of human labour by reason of the multitude of prisoners taken in his many wars; but still his constructions were so vast and so numerous, that this multitude would not have sufficed had not their services been supplemented by that of the subject races dwelling in Egypt—Hebrews, Shartana, and others.

And the motive, which had originally lain at the root of the Israelite oppression, was still active and vigorous, still one that ruled the policy of Egypt, and was regarded in governmental circles as of constraining force. The Hebrew people were still viewed as a danger, their multiplication as a thing to be checked, their aspirations and energies as needing repression. Philo tells us[1] that the taskmasters continually became more and more savage, that many of them were "wild beasts in human shape, as cruel as poisonous snakes and carnivorous tigers, with hearts as hard as steel or adamant, utterly pitiless, and unwilling to make allowance for any shortcoming, whatever its cause." And he declares that the result was a great mortality among the oppressed people, who perished in heaps, as though they had been stricken by some fearful plague, and were not even allowed burial, but were cast out beyond the borders of the land, to

[1] "Vit. Mosis," pp. 86, 87.

moulder away on the bare sand, or to be devoured by vultures and jackals.

"In process of time," however, the king, who had inflicted all this misery—of whom a modern writer says, that "there was not a stone in his monuments which had not cost a human life"[1]—went the way of all flesh, sickened and died (Exod. ii. 23). He had reached the age of seventy-seven years, one rarely attained by Egyptian monarchs, and was in the sixty-seventh year of his reign, counting from the time when he was associated upon the throne by his father. In person, tall and handsome, with a good forehead, a large, well-formed, slightly aquiline nose, a well-shaped mouth, lips that are not too full, a small delicate chin, and eyes that are thoughtful and pensive; he had well trained himself in warlike exercises, and was physically a perfect type of the most highly-bred, partly Semitized, Egyptian. In his early wars he greatly distinguished himself, and the "Epic Poem" of Pentaour, engraved upon the walls of more than one of his temples, is an undying commemoration of his martial exploits. He seems not to have been wanting in natural affection, and both towards his father and towards his eldest son he expresses himself upon his monuments with tenderness. But all this promise, all these natural advantages and endowments, were marred and spoilt by an overweening vanity and arrogance, fostered by the circumstances of his life, by his father's too partial fondness, by his own successes, by the flattery and adulation that surrounded him, and increasing ever more and more as time went on, until it became an absorbing and impious egotism. Notwithstanding his professed regard for his father, Ramesses in his later years showed himself his father's worst enemy, by erasing his name from the monuments upon which it had been inscribed, and in many instances substituting his own. Amid a great show of regard for the deities of his country, and for the ordinances of the established worship, he contrived that the chief result of all that he did for religion should be the glorification of himself. Other kings had arrogated to themselves a certain qualified divinity, and after their deaths had sometimes been placed by some of their successors on a par with the real national gods; but it remained for Ramesses II. to associate himself during his lifetime with such leading deities as Ra and Tum, as Phthah, Ammon, and Horus, and to claim equally with them the religious

[1] Lenormant, "Manuel d'histoire Ancienne," vol. i. p. 423.

regards of his subjects. As vanity made him trench on the prerogatives of the gods, so it made him careless of the lives and sufferings of men. To obtain the glory of being, as he is, indisputably the greatest of Egyptian builders, he utterly disregarded the cries and groans of those over whom he ruled; he exacted forced labour from all the subject races within his dominions pitilessly. As M. Lenormant observes: "It is not without a feeling of absolute horror that one can picture to oneself the thousands of captives who must have died under the rod of the taskmasters, or victims of excessive fatigue and of privations of all sorts, while they were erecting by their forced labour the gigantic constructions in which the insatiable vanity of the Egyptian monarch took a delight."[1]

Ramesses, however, was dead—the God, of whom he had made himself the rival, and whose people he had used so cruelly, had called him to his last account—and the unfortunate wretches employed upon the public works in progress may have momentarily breathed more freely, and felt a sense of relief. Princes are always popular on their coronation day; and the son who had succeeded Ramesses II., a weak prince, not credited with much ambition, might have seemed unlikely to continue his father's policy of severe and cruel oppression. But it soon became apparent, that Menephthah had neither the goodness of heart nor the strength of character that would lead him to initiate a change. Though, comparatively speaking, unambitious, and free from any desire to astonish posterity by vast constructive works of any kind, he was yet inclined to carry on various constructions left incomplete by his father, and even to set others on foot in different parts of the empire. Thus, any expectations which the Israelites may have formed of their sufferings being alleviated in consequence of his accession, were disappointed. "The king of Egypt died; and the children of Israel" still "sighed by reason of the bondage; and they cried, and their cry came up unto God by reason of the bondage." The affliction continued equally bitter, the labour equally hard; the taskmasters still plied their sticks (Exod. iii. 7); the Israelites "groaned" (Exod. ii. 24); and their cry went up to heaven.

Under these circumstances God once more "came down" (Exod. iii. 8), not, however, this time to investigate,[2] but to de-

[1] Lenormant, "Manuel," vol. i. p. 423.

[2] As when the Tower of Babel was built (Gen. xi. 5), and when Sodom was about to be punished (Gen. xviii. 21)

liver. "He had seen, He had seen the affliction of His people which were in Egypt"—He "had heard their groaning" (Exod. ii. 24), and remembered His covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob; He had determined within Himself that the time was come both for vengeance and for deliverance, and had settled what should be the method of the deliverance, and who should be the deliverer. It remained that He should execute His purposes.

The first step was to recall Moses from the land of Midian to Egypt, and formally to give him a commission to deliver the people. "Moses kept the flock of Jethro, his brother-in-law, the priest of Midian; and he led the flock to the back of the wilderness"—far from the shores of the Red Sea, where Jethro seems to have dwelt, "and came to the mountain of God, even to Horeb" (Exod. iii. 1). We do not know the precise place; but "a tradition, reaching back to the sixth century of the Christian era, fixes it in the same deep seclusion as that to which in all probability Moses afterwards led the Israelites. The convent of Justinian is built over what was supposed to be the exact spot where the shepherd was bid to draw his sandals from off his feet."[1] This spot is on the right flank of Sinai, in a narrow valley, called the Wady Shoaib, which runs south-eastward from the great plain in front of the Ras-Sufsâfeh, whence it is almost certain that the Law was delivered, and the narrower plain of the Wady-Sebayeh at the eastern foot of the Jebel Mousa. Here, or at any rate in this neighbourhood, as Moses walked with his flock, pasturing it, there suddenly appeared to him, a little out of his direct path (Exod. iii. 4), a wonderful sight. Upon the mountain-side was a well-known shittim, or acacia, tree—"the thorn-tree of the desert, spreading out its tangled branches, thick-set with white thorns, over the rocky ground."[2] This tree, as Moses approached, appeared to him all ablaze with light, as if on fire; but instead of the branches crackling and shrivelling up, as they would have done naturally had the fire been real, the whole tree remained unconsumed, the flames merely playing about it. Then said Moses: "I will now turn aside, and see this great sight, why the bush is not burnt" (Exod. iii. 3). Accordingly, he ascended the hill-side, and approached the phenomenon to examine it,

[1] Stanley, "Lectures on the Jewish Church," vol. i. p. 107.
[2] Stanley, in Smith's "Dictionary of the Bible," vol. ii. p. 427.

when a voice called to him from the midst of the flames, and he at once understood that he was the object of a Divine manifestation. First he was addressed by name like Samuel (1 Sam. iii. 10), and St. Paul (Acts ix. 4), the voice calling out, "Moses, Moses." Then he was bidden not to draw too near, and warned, that, as the place was holy, it became him to loose his sandals from off his feet, as Orientals do when they enter a place of worship. Finally, he was told who it was that addressed him, and what he was required to do.

No angel had been sent to speak to him; but God had come down Himself—"the God of his father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob" (ver. 6)—the same that had appeared and spoken with the patriarchs on so many occasions—doubtless, the Second Person of the Holy Trinity, the Word or Son of God, the Mediator between God and man, the "Messenger of the Covenant." So Moses "hid his face; for he was afraid to look upon God." Prostrate in worship he listened while Jehovah spake and said: "I have seen, I have seen the affliction of my people which are in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters; for I know their sorrows; and I am come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land unto a good land and a large, unto a land flowing with milk and honey, unto the place of the Canaanites. . . . Now, therefore, behold, the cry of the children of Israel has come unto Me; and I have also seen the oppression wherewith the Egyptians oppress them. Come now, therefore, and *I will send thee unto Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring forth My people*, the children of Israel, *out of Egypt*" (vers. 7–10). The mission was clear, plain, unmistakable—the people were to be delivered, to be led out of Egypt into Palestine; Moses was to be their leader, and, as a first step, he was to go and to plead their cause before Pharaoh.

But Moses was unwilling. He distrusted his fitness for the task. Unlike Isaiah, whose prompt response to God's call was, "Here am I—send me" (Isa. vi. 8), but like Jeremiah, who, when appointed to be a prophet, exclaimed: "Ah, Lord God! Behold, I cannot speak; for I am a child" (Jer. i. 6), Moses was reluctant to undertake the task assigned him. "Who am I," he said, "that I should go unto Pharaoh, and that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt?" (Exod. iii. 11). Probably he thought that his long sojourn in the wilderness, his

shepherd's life, his comparative rusticity, and his oblivion of the habits of courts, unsuited him for the part which he was now called upon to play, and made it almost certain that he would fail. He may also have regarded his age, since he was not far short of eighty years old, as disqualifying him for the active duties which under the circumstances would, it might have seemed, have to be discharged by a deliverer. He was diffident, also, as appears later (Exod. iv. 10), of his powers as a speaker, and thought that he would be unable, with his "slow speech" and "slow tongue," to persuade either Pharaoh or his own countrymen. Moses, therefore, like Jeremiah, sought to decline the task set him, preferring to remain in the obscurity in which he had now lived for nearly forty years. But the purpose of God is unchangeable. "Certainly," came the reply out of the midst of the glowing flame, "certainly I will be with thee; and this shall be a token unto thee that I have sent thee. When thou hast brought forth the people out of Egypt, ye shall serve God upon this mountain" (Exod. iii. 12). It might have seemed that such a promise and such an assurance—"*I* will be *with thee;*" "When thou *hast brought* forth the people out of Egypt"—would, with a God-fearing man, have overcome any reluctance, and produced a willing acceptance of the mission assigned. But it was not so. The diffidence of Moses was deep seated, invincible. In spite of the Divine promise and assurance, objection after objection rises to his lips; the people will ask him for the name of the God who has sent him, and he will not know what to reply (ver. 13); they will not believe that God has appeared to him at all, or given him any commission (Exod. iv. 1); his slowness of speech will make his mission a failure if he undertakes it (ver. 10). To each of these excuses God condescends to make reply. The Name which he is to announce as that of the God who has sent him is to be Jehovah "the Self-Existent"—a new name and yet an old one—old, in that it has been hitherto one out of the many names of the Almighty (Gen. xxii. 14); new, in that it is to be henceforth God's proper name, and to be understood as asserting *self*-existence: incredulity in his mission he is to meet by a display of miracles, three of which he is empowered to work at his pleasure (Exod. iv. 3–9); his want of natural eloquence will be supplied by God, who will "be with his mouth, and teach him what he shall say" (ver. 12). Thus met at every point, and having nothing more

that he can urge, Moses yields, but even now with an ill grace and grudgingly: "Send, I pray thee, by the hand of him whom thou wilt send"—not "make any one Thine apostle *so that it be not me*;"[1] but "Do Thy pleasure—send any one, even, if it so please Thee, me"—*i.e.*, I resist no longer—I will go; but I go under compulsion, not seeing the fitness of the choice, not expecting to succeed, but simply because I am forced to submit to Thy will.

Then was "the anger of Jehovah kindled against Moses" (ver. 14). Only twice in the whole course of the history is Moses said to have angered God, on this occasion and at the waters of Meribah (Num. xx. 10–13; Deut. i. 37, &c.). Strangely enough, while there his fault was arrogance and an undue assumption of plenary power, here he sinned by an undue and obstinate diffidence. Self-will may perhaps be said to have lain at the root of both errors; but in the one case it was self-willed assumption, in the other, self-willed renunciation and false humility.[2] Each time the fault of Moses drew down upon him a temporal punishment. On the present occasion he was taken at his word. As he declined the sole leadership, he was deprived of the sole leadership. Aaron was appointed to share the office of leader with him, and when speech was needed, had to be the chief speaker (Exod. iv. 14). "In all outward appearance," as Dean Stanley observes, "as the chief of the tribe of Levi, at the head of the family of Amram, as the spokesman and interpreter, as the first who 'spake to the people and to Pharaoh all the words which the Lord had spoken to Moses,' and did the signs in the sight of the people, as the permanent inheritor of the sacred rod or staff, the emblems of rule and power, Aaron, not Moses, must have been"—in the eyes of the Egyptians—"the representative and leader of Israel."[3] Moreover, by his persistent diffidence, Moses lost the possession of high gifts which God was ready to confer upon him. The promise, "I will be with thy mouth, and teach thee what thou shalt say," was equivalent to a declaration that God would make him eloquent, though he was not so by nature; and had the faith of Moses been sufficiently strong to overcome his self-distrust, he would have added eloquence and persuasive speech to his

[1] Stanley, "Lectures on the Jewish Church," vol. i. p. 113.

[2] Compare the ἐθελοταπεινοφροσύνη of St. Paul (Col. ii. 18).

[3] "Lectures on the Jewish Church," vol. i. pp. 115, 116.

other splendid endowments. As it was, he had to yield precedence in these respects to his otherwise far less gifted brother, and to share with him the fame which might have been all his own, of being the people's leader and deliverer (Micah vi. 4).

The question has been asked, What was the deficiency of which Moses complained, and which caused his self-distrust? Was it mere shyness—the difficulty, which meets almost every speaker at first, of maintaining his self-possession when he attempts to address an audience, of collecting and commanding his thoughts, finding words to express them, and a ready power of giving his words utterance? Or, was it something quite different from this, such as "a natural impediment owing to defect in the organs of speech," as Kalisch thinks?[1] A Jewish tradition is alleged in support of this latter view—a tradition that Moses had a difficulty in pronouncing the labials, *b*, *v*, *m*, *ph*, *p*. But the expressions used by Moses himself—"not a man of words," "slow of speech," "of a slow tongue," "of uncircumcised lips"—seem rather to indicate mere unreadiness, want of an easy flow of words; an inability like that of Cromwell rather than like that of Demosthenes—not a stammer, or a stutter, or a lisp, or a difficulty in the pronunciation of any letter, but a slowness to find appropriate words for the expression of his thoughts, a want of facility in the use of the weapon of speech. Such a defect is not unusual in those who ultimately become great speakers; it belonged to Luther, to John Knox, perhaps even to St. Paul, whose early efforts at preaching were, according to his detractors (2 Cor. x. 10), "contemptible." Without any miracle, Moses might have been led on in course of time, by use and practice, to the eloquence of which he pronounced himself destitute—with God's special grace assisting him, he might have attained to it, if not suddenly, yet at any rate rapidly.

At length, with whatever reluctance, Moses had yielded himself to the Divine will, and was prepared, in conjunction with Aaron, to undertake the great and difficult task assigned him. But, before setting out on his journey to return to Egypt, he must at least, in common politeness, announce his intention to Jethro; he must deliver up the charge of Jethro's flock, which he had undertaken; it may even have been necessary that he should obtain Jethro's consent to his departure. It is not un-

[1] See his Commentary on Exod. iii. 10.

likely, that when Moses was accepted into Raguel's family, he was formally enrolled as a member into the tribe to which Raguel belonged. If so, the tribal law would probably require an express permission from the head, for the departure of a member to be regular and legitimate. The words of Moses to Jethro favour this view of his position—"*Let me go, I pray thee*," he said, "and return unto my brethren which are in Egypt, and see whether they be yet alive" (Exod. iv. 18). He asks leave, and asks it with some humility, as requesting a favour, not as demanding a right; and Jethro grants the request, grants it unhesitatingly and ungrudgingly, in the few but all-sufficient words—"Go in peace." The relations between the two at the time are pleasingly, if slightly, portrayed. Moses takes no airs of grandeur or dignity upon him on account of his recent appointment to be God's instrument in a great work; he has a grand mission, but he claims nothing on account of it; he has vast miraculous powers, but he arrogates nothing to himself on account of them; he is his old simple self; he appears before his employer and chief, and sues humbly, yet without servility, for a certain permission to be granted him. He assigns a reason for his request, a sufficient reason, yet one far short of his full reason. And Jethro, without cavil, or sneer, or remonstrance, or inconvenient curiosity, accepts the reason and grants the request, with the same simplicity with which it has been made. He will lose a valuable subject, a useful servant, a new connection; and with him, he will lose those dependent on him, a sister to whom he may have been tenderly attached, and two nephews; but he acquiesces, he makes no difficulty, he utters no complaint. He will not mar the grace of his assent by cold words of disapproval, much less by inquisitiveness or by reproaches. "Go in peace," he says—*i.e.* "Go with my full good-will; and may God prosper thy going. May things turn out for thee as thou wishest! *Peace* and prosperity attend thee whithersoever thou goest and wheresoever thou art!"

Moses had permission to depart; but it would seem he did not hasten his departure. Various causes may have induced him to put off his journey. First, it may have been the hot season, and he may have waited in order to travel in the winter time. Secondly, was it safe for him to return? The king was dead, but might not procedure against him be taken by others,

if he returned? Thirdly, he had been told that Aaron his brother was coming forth from Egypt to see him (Exod. iv. 14), would it not be better to wait till he arrived, and brought information of the general position of Egyptian affairs? At any rate, for whatever reason, he was delaying his departure; and a further interposition of the Divine authority was necessary, in order to induce him to set out. "The Lord said unto Moses *in Midian*, Go, return into Egypt; for all the men are dead who sought thy life" (Exod. iv. 19). The renewed command was a spur to the laggard, a plain direction which he did not venture to disobey; and the assurance that his life was no longer sought removed one objection to his returning. So at length the decisive step was taken, and Moses started on his return journey.

The picture of his departure (Exod. iv. 29) is graphic. Moses takes his wife and his children—"his wife, whom he had won by his chivalrous attack on the Bedouin shepherds;" and the children born to him in his exile, and named in two opposite moods of sorrow and rejoicing, and he sets his wife upon his ass—"*the* ass," the only beast of burthen that he possesses—and places her infant son, or perhaps both her sons, in her arms, while, leaning on his staff, he manfully trudges by their side. It is no large cavalcade that goes forth, no company of camels with gay tassels and jingling bells, no troop of prancing horses, no pomp of chariots—one ass bears all the treasures of the man who will shortly beard the Pharaoh, and "spoil the Egyptians," and come out of Egypt with much substance; and his treasure consists, not in silver, or gold, or jewels, or rich raiment, but in the wife and little ones, which are all that Midian has given him. Involuntarily, as we contemplate the picture, our thoughts go forward to that other narrow household, which went from Palestine into Egypt in the days of Herod the Great (Matt. ii. 14), whose "flight" has been so often represented by painters; to Joseph trudging along the sandy path, supported by his staff, and Mary seated on the ass by his side, and pressing the young child to her bosom. Here the interest is concentrated on the aged man, there on the infant child; here danger is being affronted, there it is being escaped; but in both cases the journey is being undertaken at the express command of God, its outward circumstances are similar, and it is necessary for the accomplishment of God's purposes with

respect to man. If Moses does not go into Egypt, there will be no deliverance of the fleshly Israel from their oppressors; if the "young child" be not carried thither out of the reach of Herod, there will be no deliverance of the spiritual Israel from sin and Satan.

The journey has little more than commenced when it is interrupted by a strange incident. At one of the halting-places, where there was perhaps a khan or caravanserai, Moses is struck down by a sudden severe illness, an illness which threatens to be fatal. It is at once borne in upon the mind of Zipporah, perhaps of both Zipporah and her husband, that God's anger has been incurred by neglect of a duty known to both of them, but not performed by either. Eliezer, Zipporah's infant child, born not many days before they set out on their journey, had not been circumcised on the eighth day after his birth, as the law of God commanded (Gen. xvii. 10–14), perhaps because Zipporah objected to the rite, deeming it barbarous and unnecessary, perhaps because Moses thought it would be inconvenient to have the rite performed during a journey. Zipporah was convinced that her husband's life was threatened for this reason, and she therefore took a sharp stone knife, such as the Egyptians used for making incisions with a view to embalming, and with it performed the ceremony. To save her husband, she could consent to make her child suffer; but, in token of her repugnance and abhorrence of the rite, she flung the bloody knife and fragment of flesh at her husband's feet, with the reproachful words—"Surely a bloody husband thou art to me—a bloody husband, in respect of the circumcisions" (Exod. iv. 25, 26). The rite completed, in however faulty a spirit, Moses at once began to recover, God "let him go," remitted the death penalty, and restored him to his former health, so that he was able to resume his journey.

But the question must have arisen, Should he persist in his original design of being accompanied to Egypt by his wife and children? Zipporah had scarcely shown herself a "helpmate." If her abhorrence of the rite had caused it to be delayed, she had brought her husband into imminent danger. When she relented, it was with an ill grace, with an unseemly act, and with words that showed anger against her husband, if not positive dislike of him. She was now encumbered with a child which would for several days require careful tendance. On

the whole, Moses seems to have thought it best under the circumstances to give up his original plan, and continue his journey alone, sending Zipporah and her two children back to the care and protection of Jethro (Exod. xviii. 2). He probably found at the caravanserai some person whom he could trust to escort her to her brother's tents and guard her against the perils of the way. He felt that he would be more independent, and better able to cope with the difficulties that would necessarily impede his enterprise in Egypt, if he were free for the time from the care of his wife and children, and if, knowing them to be in safety, he could devote all his thought and attention to the public work which had been assigned him.

The lone wanderer now took his solitary way through the desolate wadys of the Sinaitic highland, by what exact path we cannot say, but probably by that which he had pursued, in the reverse direction, when he fled from Egypt to Midian. He probably knew the eastern desert well, as far as the pastures of Sinai, but with the western desert he would only have the slight acquaintance derived from one solitary journey made nearly forty years previously. One principal hope cheered him as he toiled along the weary way, scorched during the daytime by the fierce blaze of the sun, and chilled by the cold dews at night. God hath revealed it to him that his brother, Aaron, was about to set forth to meet him (Exod. iv. 14); and he would feel each day that possibly, ere the sun declined and the shadows grew long, the happy meeting might take place. Each day the hope would grow, and the desire for its accomplishment increase; till at last, by God's blessing and careful guidance of each, there came fruition—the brothers met in some part of "the mount of God" (Exod. iv. 27), that is, of the higher hill country, probably between Sinai and Serbal. Ah! what a meeting was that! Two brothers fondly attached, yet parted for well nigh forty years; at the time of separation in the full vigour of manhood, now grown old and grey, verging towards eighty years of age, yet hale and hearty, with eyes undimmed, with strength but little diminished; see them approaching, drawing nearer and nearer to each other step by step, questioning, doubting, suspecting, at last fully recognizing each the other, and quickening their steps till they meet in a long embrace. "Aaron went to meet Moses, and he met him in the mount of God, and kissed him."

On the meeting followed mutual confidences. Aaron would

communicate to Moses all that we understand by "home news"—particulars concerning Amram, and Jochebed, and Miriam, and the old house, and the new ties, if any, that had been contracted, and concerning his own children, Nadab and Abihu, and Eleazar, and Ithamar, and his wife, Elisheba or Elisabeth, and their numerous kindred, sons of Izhar and Uzziel, Amram's brethren, and others. Moses would recount his experiences, would tell Aaron of his marriage, of Reuel, and Jethro, and of his two sons, of his peril at the caravanserai, and his escape from the jaws of death, and his subsequent journeyings; and further he would relate, as we are told he did (Exod. iv. 28), "all the words of the Lord who had sent him"—the mystery of the burning bush, and the summons that had come to him out of the bush, and the revelation to him of the special name by which God would henceforth be called, and the mission laid upon him, and his repugnance, and final acceptance of it on the condition that Aaron should be his spokesman. Moreover, he would tell his brother of the miracles which he had been empowered to work, and would perhaps exhibit them, to convince Aaron that he was not a fanatic, nor an impostor. And then the two would proceed together and in loving converse go on their way to Egypt—*par nobile fratrum* if ever there was one—in the past long separated, but henceforth constant fellow-workers, mutual aids to each other, with two brief exceptions,[1] ever of one heart and of one soul, united, as two brothers have but seldom been, for the long space of nearly forty years, in the accomplishment of a great and glorious work, which will never be forgotten, but will keep their memory green, while the world endures.

[1] Exod. xxxii. 1–25 Num. xii. 1–10.

CHAPTER IX.

THE LONG STRUGGLE WITH PHARAOH.

The two brothers convene the elders of Israel—Their mission accepted—Their first appearance before Pharaoh and the risk they ran—The demand and its rejection—Pharaoh increases the oppression—Moses appeal to God and God's answer—Second interview between the two brothers and the king—Contest with the magicians begins—The First Plague: Pharaoh unmoved by it—The Second, or Plague of Frogs: Pharaoh relents, but recovers himself—The Third, or Plague of Lice: the magicians give way, but the Pharaoh is unmoved—The Fourth, or Plague of Beetles: Pharaoh gives permission, but retracts it—The Fifth, or Plague of Murrain—The Sixth, or Plague of Boils—The Seventh, or Plague of Hail: Pharaoh again yields, but retracts—The Eighth, or Plague of Locusts—The Ninth, or Plague of Darkness—The Tenth, or Death of the First-born—Pharaoh drives Israel out.

THE interchange of thought between the two brothers during their long journey from "the mount of God" to Egypt led to a conviction, in which both shared, that, before any application could be made, with reasonable prospect of success, to Pharaoh, it was necessary that their mission should be fully acknowledged and accepted by the people of Israel. Of what avail would it be to contend with that mighty prince, and gradually subdue his spirit, and overcome the proud resistance which he was sure to offer to their message, if at the last, when the time came for action, the people should repudiate their leadership, and decline to move at their command? Practically, therefore, the first step to be taken was to secure the adhesion of the mass of the Israelites. For this purpose application was made, as God had Himself suggested (Exod. iii. 16), to "the elders of the people"—

that is, to those native officials who in different localities, exercised, and were allowed to exercise, a certain authority over the rest of their countrymen. In Oriental countries, an alien race dwelling among the ruling nation, is almost always permitted to have its chiefs or head men, who control it, act on its behalf, and are the means of communication between it and the government. Among the Israelites these persons would probably be "the chiefs of the fathers"—*i.e.* the hereditary heads of families. Moses and Aaron, though destitute of any legal right to convene a meeting of such persons, regarded it as morally within their competence to do so, and issued a summons, which was obeyed, to "all the elders of the children of Israel" (Exod. iv. 29).

It must have been a grand gathering. From Zoan, and its suburb, Pa-Ramesses, from Pa-Tum or Pithom, from On or Heliopolis, from Pi-Bast or Bubastis, from Memphis, and perhaps from towns still further distant, from all the many villages in the "field of Zoan" and the "land of Goshen," came trooping the Hebrew grey-beards, drawn together by an unwonted summons, to hear they knew not what, from the mouths of two men unknown to most of them. The place of meeting was, no doubt, in some purely Hebrew district, some part of Goshen, probably towards the eastern border, where the assembly would be the least likely to draw attention. When all were come together, the two brothers appeared before them, and delivered the message which God had sent them by Moses. The message was as follows: "The Lord God of your fathers (*Jehovah-Elohim*), the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, appeared unto me, saying, I have surely visited you, and seen that which is done to you in Egypt; and I have said, I will bring you up out of the affliction of Egypt unto the land of the Canaanites, and the Hittites, and the Amorites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites, unto a land flowing with milk and honey: and they shall hearken unto thy voice, and thou shalt come, thou *and the elders of Israel*, unto the king of Egypt, and ye shall say unto him, the Lord of the Hebrews (*Jehovah Elohim*) hath met with us; and now let us go, we beseech thee, three days' journey into the wilderness, that we may sacrifice to the Lord our God. And I am sure that the king of Egypt will not let you go, no, not by a mighty hand. And I will stretch out my hand, and smite Egypt with all my wonders, which I will do in the midst thereof: and after that he will let you go. And I will

give this people favour in the sight of the Egyptians ; and it shall come to pass, that, when ye go, ye shall not go empty ; but every woman shall borrow (or, ask) of her neighbour, and of her that sojourneth in her house, jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and raiment ; and ye shall put them upon your sons, and upon your daughters ; and ye shall spoil the Egyptians" (Exod. iii. 16-22). The message delivered, there was doubtless at first hesitation, doubt, incredulity. The promise of God to Abraham was so old a matter ; the land of Canaan had so slipped from their memories ; it was so long since God had appeared to any among them ; their past history had so faded from their minds, that they could not possibly accept at once, and be prepared to act upon, the strange news brought them. If they did not say to Moses, in so many words, "The Lord hath not appeared unto thee" (Exod. iv. 1), at any rate they made it sufficiently clear that their hearts were not impressed, their assent was not gained : something more was needed to move them. Then Moses fell back upon his credentials, and produced them. Recognizing the elders' hesitation as just, reasonable, rightful—for as yet they had no proof that he was not an impostor, they had no evidence that he was not a fanatic—he proceeded to bring forth and exhibit before them the proofs with which God had furnished him, that he was a man empowered by God to declare His will to the nation, therefore no impostor, no fanatic, but a divinely-commissioned messenger, who spoke the words of soberness and truth. He cast his rod on the ground, and it became, manifestly and palpably, a serpent ; he put forth his hand, and took the serpent by the tail, and it was once more a rod. He put his hand, which was free from all blemish, into the bosom of his garment, and drew it forth, and showed it to them all white and leprous ; he then placed it within his vest a second time, and drew it forth restored to its former condition. He took in a vessel of the water of the river, and poured it out upon the dry land, and the liquid was no longer water, but blood, which lay in a red pool upon the ground (Exod. iv. 30, compared with vers. 2–9). The elders saw the three signs, and were convinced of their reality, and expressed themselves satisfied ; God, they allowed, had indeed "visited His people" (ver. 31) : and they reported all that they had seen and heard to the people in their several localities ; and "the people believed"—the whole nation accepted the mission of Moses and Aaron, acknowledged them

as their leaders, and empowered them to act in their name. Henceforth, whatever dissatisfaction, whatever impatience, whatever jealousy of the two brothers, showed itself in any quarter, the nation as a whole never withdrew its confidence from them, never rejected their leadership, or lowered them from their pre-eminent position. It was felt that God had taken the matter into His own hands, and as a successful issue could only be counted on through His help, a faithful adherence to the leaders of His choice was a matter of absolute necessity.

It is uncertain how much time was consumed in these proceedings; but we must always be upon our guard against supposing that each event of the sacred narrative followed immediately upon the event directly preceding it in the narration. Considerable intervals of time may have separated the death of Ramesses II. from the appearance of God to Moses in the bush, that appearance from the application made by Moses to Jethro, Jethro's permission to Moses to depart and Moses' actual departure, Moses' illness and the continuance of his journey, the arrival of Moses and Aaron in Egypt and the convening of the elders, the convening of the elders and the adoption of Moses and Aaron for their leaders by the nation, and between the signifying of this adoption by the elders to the two brothers and their next recorded step, their appearance before Pharaoh. The extreme brevity of the sacred narrative is such as naturally to deceive us, unless we continually bear in mind how necessary compression was to a writer in the position of Moses, and how little it is in his manner to give prominence to the chronological element.

Moses and Aaron were now at length empowered to act on behalf of the people. Their action, however, was not rash or precipitate. They bided their time. "*Afterward*," we are told, Moses and Aaron "went in," and spake to Pharaoh. They had undertaken a momentous task. They had to present themselves before a king, who, by the long-established usage of the country, was looked upon as "a god upon earth."—*neter nefer*, "the good god," and *neter aa*, "the great god"—"son of the Sun," "the living Horus," and who inherited from his father the idea that he was actually on a par with the greatest of the recognized divinities, with Ra and Tum, with Phthah and Ammon and Horus. "The king in that first monarchy," as Dean Stanley observes, "was the visible god upon earth. The

only thing like it that has been since seen is the deification of the Roman emperors. No pure monotheism would for a moment have been compatible with such an intense exaltation."[1] Menephthah, the successor of Ramesses II., took as his peculiar titles, "beloved of Ammon," "soul of the Sun," and "he who trusts in Truth." He is represented as sitting on "the throne of Horus, where he had been placed to give life to mankind, where he had gone as king to watch over mortals."[2] He is called "the living," "the Giver of Life," "the gracious Lord," "the good God," "the son of the Sun," "the Horus rejoicing in truth."[3] Soon after his accession to the throne, Egypt had been invaded by a powerful host of Libyans and their allies, among whom are thought to have been included Greeks and Italians; he had abstained from meeting them in person, but his generals had met and defeated them with great slaughter; Egypt had been placed in safety, and Menephthah, counting as his own all the successes gained by his generals, was full of vainglory and arrogance. He was, in reality, a weak prince, capricious, changeful, timid; but his vanity was excessive, and his self-assertion equal to that of any former monarch. It was a bold thing to confront such a monarch in his palace, on his throne, among his courtiers, and to urge on him an unpalatable request. Moses and Aaron, when they appeared before him, took their lives in their hands. He was an irresponsible despot; and, though it was a part of the duty of a Pharaoh to give audience to all who approached him in the authorized way, and to allow them to prefer their petitions, yet there was no security against an outbreak of irrepressible anger, if the petition was considered an improper one, and, during the outbreak, a sign might be made, or a word spoken, dooming the petitioners to death.

The brothers, however, were not daunted. Both were venerable figures. Moses, at eighty years of age, retained much of the comeliness of his youth. The fire of his eyes was undimmed (Deut. xxxiv. 7) to a much later date. He was tall and dignified, with long streaming hair, of a reddish hue, tinged with grey, and with a long shaggy beard.[4] Aaron, at eighty-three, can scarcely have presented a less venerable appearance. He had

[1] Stanley, "Sinai and Palestine," Introduction, p. xxxvi.
[2] "Records of the Past," vol. iv. p. 41, § 10. [3] Ibid. pp. 42–48.
[4] Artapanus ap. Euseb. "Præp. Ev." ix. 27; Diod. Sic. xxxiv. Fr. 1.

the ready address of a practised speaker (Exod. iv. 14), and though probably a less striking figure than his brother, yet lent additional importance to the deputation. It was understood that the two chiefs were about to speak on behalf of their people. The usual formalities of the presentation having been completed, Aaron, the divinely-appointed spokesman, stood forth and delivered the message of Jehovah to the king. We must not suppose that his words are fully recorded. Rather, the gist of them is given. It was impressed on the Pharaoh, that Jehovah, the God of Israel, had appeared to those who addressed him, and had charged them with the following message to him: "Let My people go that they may hold a feast unto Me in the wilderness" (Exod. v. 1). More definitely the demand was, "Let us go, we pray thee, *a three days' journey* into the desert, and sacrifice unto the Lord our God" (ver. 3).

The Egyptians could readily appreciate the idea of a great sacrifice, and of a great national gathering to celebrate it, since such gatherings were not uncommon among themselves. Pharaoh could not therefore affect surprise at such a request. Nor could he well object to the "three days' journey into the wilderness," since he would understand the desire of a people to hold their national festival by themselves, at a distance from those who would at best be curious lookers-on, and might be deriders of their ceremonies. But he meets and refuses the request on two grounds—(1) The God, whose commands are reported to him, is not *his* God, has no authority over *him*, is, in fact, wholly unknown to him (Exod. v. 2); and (2) He needs the Israelites' labours, and will not have them interrupted (ver. 4). It will be observed, that he does not dispute Moses' facts, or the reasonableness of the claim that he had made; he simply goes upon his own rights—Jehovah is nothing to him; the Israelites are his bondsmen; Jehovah's words are therefore to him as nothing; and he will do with the Israelites as he pleases—he will exact from them the utmost labour that is possible. Even Moses and Aaron ought to be at work at the kilns or in the brickfields—he dismisses them therefore with the short, sharp phrase—"Get you unto your burdens."

Their failure on this first interview cannot have surprised the brothers. God had warned Moses that Pharaoh would not let the people go, until Egypt had been smitten with a long series of chastisements, culminating in the death of the Pharaoh's

own first-born (Exod. iii. 19, 20; iv. 21–23). The brothers therefore cannot have hoped anything from their first application; and they even may have felt that they had reason to congratulate themselves on having come off from the interview so well as they had, without being struck, or arrested as stirrers-up of discontent, or actually set to the hard taskwork under which their fellow-countrymen were suffering. Perhaps, however, they looked for some immediate interposition of God, in vindication of his own honour, some commencement of the "smiting" by which they knew that the deliverance of the people was to be effected. But God showed no sign. All things remained as they had been from the beginning. The Pharaoh's defiance of Jehovah brought upon him no immediate punishment. Egypt was not smitten. The brothers under these circumstances may have experienced some sense of disappointment; however, they made no complaint—they were ready to wait patiently until God should give them some new direction how to proceed.

But now a worse disappointment came upon them. The Pharaoh, angered at their interposition, determined to punish it by heaping fresh sufferings upon those on whose behalf the brothers had interceded. By his own initiative, apparently (Exod. v. 6–9), the order went forth, that no straw should henceforth be given to the Hebrew brickmakers, but that they should themselves find the straw needed for binding the bricks together. Nevertheless, the tale of bricks was not to be diminished; the same number was to be exacted of each gang of labourers, as when the straw was furnished to them. This was a heavy aggravation of the previously over-severe burdens, and indeed was imposing a burden to which human strength was unequal. Labour as hard as they might, the brickmakers could not produce the full tale of bricks required of them; and the result was, that their head men were bastinadoed for giving in a short quantity (Exod. v. 14). Then, not unnaturally, Moses and Aaron were assailed with bitter reproaches by the sufferers—What good had their interference done? Nay, what harm had it not done? The whole nation had been made to stink in the nostrils of Pharaoh—his anger had been aroused, his vengeance provoked. The oppression of the entire people had been made very much severer than before, and the head men were in actual peril of their lives, for men died under the

bastinado. "The Lord judge you," exclaimed the unhappy officers, "whether it is not by your fault that all this has come upon us!" The reproaches of one's friends, even when undeserved, are very hard to bear. Moses and Aaron were deeply stung by the words addressed to them. But they "held their tongue," they "refrained, yea, even from good words,"—they "spake nothing," though it may have been "pain and grief to them;" and Moses at any rate took his trouble to God—bowed down before the Throne of Grace, and opened his heart to the Almighty. "Lord," he said, "Jehovah, Eternal One, wherefore hast Thou so evil entreated this people? Why is it that Thou hast sent me? For since I came to Pharaoh to speak in Thy name, he hath done evil to this people; neither hast Thou delivered Thy people at all" (Exod. v. 22, 23).

It must indeed have been a bitter moment. Having proclaimed himself a deliverer, having persuaded his nation to trust in him, having led them to expect that by the exercise of his miraculous powers he would bow the Pharaoh to his will, and obtain for them some alleviation of their "affliction," he now stood before his nation convicted, so far, of absolute failure: not only no helper, but an injurer, one who by his officious and clumsy interference had done them infinite harm. They had been in the "lowest deep" of calamity previously, but he had plunged them into a "lower deep." They had been scourged with whips; he had brought upon them a scourging with scorpions. Was it by his own fault? Had he misunderstood his commission? Or had he failed to carry it out in the proper way? Why had God "forgotten to be gracious"? Moses, reproaching himself, goes near to reproaching God—"Why hast Thou so evil entreated this people? Why is it Thou hast sent me?" He cannot gauge the depths of the Divine counsels. He cannot understand God's patience with the wicked, God's reluctance to stretch forth his arm, until their iniquity is full. He is ignorant, probably, of the sanctifying power of suffering, and does not know that God chastens in love, to purge and strengthen and purify those whom He chastens. God's ways are "far above out of sight;" and so he murmurs, and complains, and expostulates —not, however, rudely or irreverently, but so as to call forth the Divine compassion, and to draw from God a fresh series of gracious promises, and an indication that their performance is just about to commence (Exod. vi. 13).

The result is, that the two brothers are ordered to appear before Pharaoh a second time, and to exhibit before him their miraculous powers, that it may be seen whether these will be sufficient to bend his will, or whether the series of Divine visitations must commence. Pharaoh has evidently heard of the strange powers which the brothers possess, and desires to see a specimen of them (comp. Luke xxiii. 8); but he does not agree to make them a test, or promise to yield if they are satisfactory. "Show a miracle for you," he says (Exod. vii. 9); and the brothers, divinely instructed beforehand, comply. Aaron casts the rod of Moses, which he had brought from Midian, upon the ground, and it becomes a serpent—it lives and moves, and not only appears to be, but is, an actual living reptile. The Pharaoh is impressed to a certain extent; but, before determining what weight he will attach to this credential, he will see what his own magicians can do. So he "calls the wise men, and the sorcerers, and the magicians of Egypt" to his presence, and consults them with respect to the phenomenon. The magicians had, it would seem, known what they were about to witness, and had prepared themselves accordingly. Like other Egyptian officials, they entered the royal presence with what seemed to be rods in their hands, and these apparent rods, when cast upon the ground, became serpents. The Arabic tradition, preserved to us in the Korán, is to the effect, that the rods were pieces of rope, to which the magicians contrived to impart motion by artificial means, so that they seemed to be alive, and to wriggle like snakes, one twisting over another. But most modern critics are of opinion that the magicians bore in their hands real snakes, rendered torpid and stiff, so as to look like rods, which, on being thrown to the ground were disenchanted, and resumed their natural character. Another explanation is, that they were mere clever jugglers, adepts in sleight-of-hand, and that the snakes were substituted for the rods, which were skilfully hidden away. Jugglery was certainly an art well known in Egypt in ancient, as it is in modern, times; and if the skill of the jugglers was even half as great as that of their Indian fellow-craftsmen, there would be nothing at all surprising in their cheating the eyes of the spectators in the way supposed. In any case, a seeming miracle, parallel to that of Aaron, was wrought; the magicians were triumphant; the Pharaoh began to boast, and to revile Moses (Josephus); but the triumph was

short-lived. Aaron's serpent devoured in succession all the snakes of the magicians, and was then once more a rod, as at first (Exod. vii. 12).

Had the Pharaoh been a real seeker after truth, had he possessed a mind open to conviction, and entertained an honest desire to do what was right, his resistance to the message sent him would have ceased thus early. The magic of Egypt had been overcome and put to shame by the Divine power wielded by the two Hebrews. There could be no question with which side the victory had rested. But Pharaoh would not see, would not acknowledge the fact. He hardened his heart,[1] shut his eyes against the light, refused to grant the permission sought of him, declined to let the people go, and by this obduracy, he provoked, and brought down upon his people the calamity of

The First Plague.

It was morning. The opal tints of early dawn were fading in the eastern sky, and long streaks of rosy light were stretching themselves like fingers from the horizon towards the zenith, when Pharaoh, amid a proud array of chiefs, and guards, and courtiers, "went forth unto the water" (Exod. vii. 15); proceeded from his lordly palace—probably that erected by the Great Ramesses at Pa-Ramesses, a suburb of Tanis—to the brink of the mysterious and holy stream, which Egypt worshipped as one of the greatest of her gods, either to perform a customary daily act of adoration, or perhaps to honour with his presence some special annual festival. Possibly it was his duty to recite the mystic hymn, found in a manuscript of the time, where Hapi, "the hidden," was acknowledged as the giver of all good things, the source of countless blessings. "Hail to thee, O Nile," ran the words of the sacred song,[2] "that showest thyself in this land, coming in peace, giving life to Egypt. O concealed One, thou leadest the night onward to the day, a leading that rejoices the heart! Thou overflowest the gardens created by Ra; thou givest life to all animals; thou waterest the land without ceasing, from the path of heaven descending—Lover of good, bestower of

[1] The rendering of the Authorised Version, "He (Jehovah) hardened Pharaoh's heart" (Exod. vii. 13) is wrong. All that is said is, that his heart was hardened. If we ask, who hardened it, the answer must be, himself.

[2] "Records of the Past," vol. iv. p. 107.

corn, giving life to every homestead!" The rites were about to be begun, the priests were ready, the courtiers were all attention, when suddenly the monarch found himself confronted by the pertinacious Hebrews, whose inconvenient request he had distinctly negatived the day before, and was compelled to turn his attention to them. The brothers were waiting by the river's brink for his arrival, expecting it, and determined to take advantage of it. Moses stood with the miraculous rod in his hand, and Aaron stood by his side. As the king drew near, Moses took the word and said: "Jehovah sent me to thee, saying, Let My people go, that they may serve Me in the wilderness: and behold, hitherto thou hast not hearkened. Now thus saith the Lord, In this thou shalt know that I am Jehovah: behold, I will smite with the rod that is in mine hand upon the waters that are in the river, and they shall be turned to blood: and the fish that are in the river shall die, and the river shall stink; and the Egyptians shall loath to drink of the water of the river" (Exod. vii. 16, 17). Then, as Pharaoh and his courtiers stood to gaze, astonied and dumbfoundered at the threat, Aaron took the rod from Moses' hand, and stretched it forth over the fast-flowing river, and smote the water with it, and at once the life-giving and limpid stream was changed from its previous nature—the blessed fertilizing Nile, hitherto the perennial source of all Egypt's changeless prosperity, regarded as giving the sweetest water in the world, and fabled to have once for eleven consecutive days flowed with honey, on a sudden *flowed with blood*—not only was blood-red, but carried between its banks, in a slow sluggish current, a mass of liquid, which had all the qualities of blood, and was revolting, fearful, provocative of actual loathing. Nor was this the whole. All the water in the side-streams, and in the canals, and in the ponds and the reservoirs, and in houses, stored away in "vessels of wood and vessels of stone," as is customary even at the present day, in order that the sediment of Nile mud may settle down, suffered at the same time the same conversion, and was rendered a horror to look upon. Soon "the river stank" (ver. 21), and the fish that were in the river died; the odour of putrefaction filled the air; everywhere was suffering, misery, disgust, and an awful fear. For seven days the plague continued (ver. 25). The red stream flowed ceaselessly on. The only alleviation which the mercy of God allowed to the people was from the moisture already in the soil before the

change fell on the river. This remained water; and the Egyptians were able to obtain by digging trenches and pits, a scanty supply of a brackish liquid, on which life was sustained while the plague lasted.

A more striking visitation, one more apt to impress the Egyptians, can scarcely be imagined. "It is not an ordinary river that is turned into blood, but the sacred, beneficent, salutary Nile, the very life of the state and of the people." [1] It is a divinity that is smitten, that is disgraced, that is turned to an object of horror. And the divinity that suffers this debasement further involves in its humiliation other divinities. The fish of the Nile were, in several instances, sacred. The lepidotus, the oxyrinchus, the eel, the carp of Esneh, were Nilotic fish, and had, all of them, a sacred character. The First Plague involved these fish in a common destruction. It smote "the gods of Egypt" with a blow that was, within its sphere, unsparing. All the gods of the waters were smitten in combination with the great Water-God, Hapi; and the animal-worship, which was so important an element in the Egyptian religion, received in this way a severe blow, and was for the time greatly discredited.

And the physical suffering implied in the visitation was great, more than can be by moderns and Englishmen readily appreciated. It was not merely that for seven days they suffered largely from the pangs of thirst, having no water, or only a scant allowance of brackish water, to drink; but they lost the fish which formed their most ordinary and favourite food; they lost the copious supply of the grateful fluid for the frequent ablutions to which they were accustomed; they could not wash their clothes, or rinse out their utensils, or scour their houses, or practise any of their usual methods of securing constant purity and cleanliness. There was never a people so devoted to cleanliness as the Egyptians—"the cleanliest of all the ancient nations," as they have been called, "clothed in white linen, anticipating, in their fastidious delicacy and ceremonial purity, the habits of modern and Northern Europe." [2] The priests especially must have grieved to miss their double daily and double nightly bath of cold water,[3] at once so delightful to their feelings and so necessary to fit them ceremonially for the performance of their sacred functions. The higher

[1] Stanley, "Lectures on the Jewish Church," vol. i. p. 118.
[2] Ibid. vol. i. p. 118. [3] Herodotus, ii. 37.

orders must have suffered almost equally from the privation; even the lower must have felt it, for in Egypt there was no class of "unwashed." And to all this negative discomfort was added the digust to the eye from the sight of the moving mass of gore, and the disgust to the sense of smell from the putridity which filled the air.

But, notwithstanding all, the marvel, the horror, the suffering, the contempt thrown on Egypt's gods, the Pharaoh continued obdurate; "neither did he lay even this [sign] to heart" (Exod. vii. 23). He consulted his magicians a second time; and by some trickery they persuaded him that they too could turn water into blood, as Moses had done; whereupon he "turned and went into his house," shutting out the marvel from his sight and from his thought, and "hardening his heart" (ver. 22), as he had done before. The affliction did not greatly afflict him. Such water as was procurable (ver. 24) would be supplied to him in tolerable abundance for his ablutions; perfumes would be burnt in his apartments to purify the air; and the rich wines of Anthylla and the Mareôtis would compensate to him for the loss of the sweet Nile water, which was perhaps not often included among his beverages. So he waited till the judgment should pass, or, perhaps from his own point of view, till the natural phenomenon should exhaust itself,[1] and the great stream resume its ordinary appearance and character.

The judgment did pass. After "a week of days" Nile did resume his ordinary appearance, and the first trial was over. Egypt, and the Pharaoh, had a breathing space. But it was not for long. After a brief space the two importunate Hebrews, divinely directed, again appeared before the monarch, again made their demand in the name of Jehovah—"Let My people go, that they may serve Me"—were again refused, and, at the Divine command, announced, and then brought about,

The Second Plague.

Aaron stretched forth his hand over the waters of Egypt—in act, probably, over the Nile only, in intention "over the streams over the rivers, and over the ponds" (Exod. viii. 5)—and lo,

[1] The Nile does occasionally turn red, owing to the presence in the water of microscopic cryptograms and infusoria. Pharaoh may have persuaded himself that what he saw was a mere aggravation of an ordinary phenomenon.

there was a plague of frogs. Frogs in hundreds, in thousands in tens of thousands, in millions, came up out of the waters—coarse, ungainly animals, if the species was the naturalist's *Rana Mosaica*—and entered the villages and the towns, and filled the streets, and made their way into the houses, and ascended into the sleeping apartments, and penetrated into the kitchens, and hopped on the rich coverlets, and entered the ovens and the kneading-troughs (ver. 3), and, in fact, were everywhere, on the couches, on the beds, in the food. How intolerable such a visitation may be, we see by the story which is told by Phœnius, a disciple of Aristotle, concerning the Pæonians and Dardanians. "In Pæonia and Dardania," he says, "there appeared once suddenly such a multitude of frogs, that they filled the houses and the streets. Therefore—as killing them or shutting the doors was of no avail, as even the vessels were full of them, the water infested, and all food uneatable; as they could scarcely set their foot upon the ground without treading on heaps of them, and as they were greatly vexed by the smell of the great numbers which died—they fled from that region altogether."[1] Similar tales are related by Diodorus and Pliny.[2] Frogs in such multitudes as are described, form not merely an annoyance, but an actual misery. To have the whole country filled with these disgusting reptiles, to be unable to walk in the streets without treading on them, to find them not only occupying one's doorstep, but in possession of one's house, in one's bedchamber, and upon one's bed, to hear their dismal croak perpetually—*βρεκεκεκὲξ κοὰξ κοάξ—οὐδὲν ἄλλο πλὴν κοάξ*—to see nothing but their loathsome forms whithersoever one looked, to be in perpetual contact with them and feel the repulsion of their cold, rough, clammy skin, to find them in one's water and in one's food, would amount to a severe affliction, and, if continued long, might drive men to despair. And the torture would be increased if, as there is reason to believe was the case in Egypt, those who suffered from them were not allowed to kill them. One of the Egyptian divinities, Heka, has the head of a frog, and we may presume therefore that the frog was a sacred animal which it was not lawful to destroy. They had, therefore, to be allowed to do much as they pleased; a man might not remove them from his bed, or from his drinking-cup, except tenderly. Still, they would have died in large num-

[1] Eustath. ad. Hom. Il. i. p. 35.
[2] Diod. Sic. iii. 30; Pliny, "H. N." viii. 29.

bers—smothered one by another, crushed accidentally behind doors, trampled through dire necessity beneath the foot of man and beast, and the houses and streets would soon be full of their mangled remains, and then a stench would arise. It is extraordinary what poor, weak, insignificant things may be made by God into whips to scourge men beyond endurance. Strangely, as it seems to us, He "chooses the weak things of the world to confound the things that are strong, and the base things of the world, and the things that are despised, yea, and the things that are not, to bring to nought the things that are" (1 Cor. ii. 28). The plague of the frogs, which affected himself as much as the meanest of his people, was felt by the Pharaoh to be intolerable, and he now showed his first sign of yielding—"Intreat the Lord," he said, "that He may take away the frogs *from me* and from my people, AND *I will let the people go*, that they may do sacrifice unto the Lord" (Exod. viii. 8). His request was granted, that his sincerity might be tested, and on the morrow the frogs "departed"—"died out of the houses, out of the villages, and out of the fields; and they gathered them together into heaps; and the land stank" (vers. 13, 14). The very removal of the plague in one respect intensified it—a sickly odour exhaled from the heaps of putrifying reptiles, which filled the streets, the gardens, and the open country.

In the second plague, as in the first, a blow was aimed at the Egyptian religion. In the first place, the plague came out of the Nile. That sacred stream, so fondly worshipped as the giver of all good, was the generator of this great evil. Nile, wont to bestow nothing but blessings, brought forth this curse. Next, the goddess Heka was discredited, and passed under a cloud. Further, the animal-worship received a second discouragement. How could those creatures be Divine which had aroused such hatred and loathing in the hearts of the entire people? How could they henceforth be looked upon without detestation? Despite their religious belief, many Egyptians had probably killed numbers while the plague lasted, as a Brahmin will kill flies when they torment him. How could those who had done so and suffered no calamity in consequence ever again put any faith in this portion of the creed which had been taught them? The whole theory of sacred animals must have suffered a shock when Heka's sacred sign, the emblem of fecundity and productiveness, became an object of hatred and abhorrence.

"When Pharaoh saw that there was respite, he hardened his heart, and hearkened not unto Moses and Aaron, as the Lord had said" (Exod. viii. 15). On reflection, Pharaoh perhaps thought that there was not so much in the miracle as he had at first fancied. His magicians had been able to "bring up frogs" out of water (ver. 7), or at least had appeared to do so. When the plague was past it seemed perhaps ridiculous to have been so annoyed, so vexed, and irritated, by such a trifle. At any rate, for whatever reason, he changed his tone, went from his word in most unkingly fashion, and withdrew the permission which, under the pressure of the calamity, he had granted. This tergiversation provoked God to send upon Egypt, without any previous notice or warning,

The Third Plague.

The nature of the third plague is disputed. The Hebrew word used (*kinnim*), both in Exodus and in the Book of Psalms (Ps. cv. 31), is thought by some to mean "gnats," by others "lice." The critical authorities on either side are tolerably equally balanced, and the arguments which they adduce have very nearly equal force. Josephus may fairly be set against Philo, the Rabbinical writers against Gesenius. It is not, perhaps, without reason that the recent Revisers of the Old Testament have retained "lice" in the text, and relegated "sand-flies" to the margin. The Egyptians had an intense hatred of lice, and looked upon them as so impure that the priests were required to "shave their entire bodies every other day, in order that no louse or other impure creature might adhere to them when they were engaged in the service of the gods."[1] And lice in North Africa constitute a terrible affliction. Sir S. Baker says, "At certain seasons it is as if the very dust of the land were turned into lice," and describes the lice in question as "a sort of tick, not larger than a grain of sand, which, when filled with blood, expands to the size of a hazel nut."[2] As the first and second plagues were fitted to work upon the Egyptian abhorrence of impurity and defilement, so, if we understand the *kinnim* as "lice," would the third be.

The plague, whatever it was, seems not to have moved the Pharaoh. Though his magicians were unable to imitate or

[1] Herodotus, ii. 37.

[2] See Millington's "Signs and Wonders in the Land of Ham," p. 85.

counterfeit it, and confessed at length that here was "the finger of God" (ver. 19), yet he himself made no sign of submission, gave no indication even of personal annoyance. Perhaps the plague was not upon *him*. The care of his attendants may have kept him free from the scourge which tormented his people. According to Josephus, it was a scourge of a terrible character. "The bodies of the Egyptians," he says, "themselves bred the vermin, and they suffered most grievously, for baths and ointments were equally unavailing to root out the evil whereby they were afflicted."[1] The foul and disgraceful character of the plague was perhaps its most distressing feature. Priding themselves, as they had ever done, on their extreme personal cleanliness, their delicacy, and their refinement, the calamity placed them upon a par with the untidiest and filthiest races of their continent. It unfitted them, while it lasted, alike for society, for appearance in public, and for religious worship. They could not dare to carry such an impurity into a temple; they could not risk disgracing themselves by the revelation of their condition to their fellow-countrymen. Each probably, as far as possible, hid his shame, and, isolating himself from the rest of mankind, nursed in secret the foulness which clung to him.

It is further to be noticed that the calamity was "upon the beasts" (vers. 17, 18)—perhaps especially upon the *sacred* beasts. The most famous temples of Egypt contained, each of them, a sacred beast—a bull, a cow, or a he-goat—which was regarded as an absolute incarnation of deity; and sacred animals of one kind or another were probably kept in all the temples. Nothing would have more horrified and astounded the Egyptians than to find their sacred animals defiled by the impurity of vermin. It was their habit to bestow the extremest care upon these creatures, to wash them, comb them, and keep their skin perfectly clean, bright, and glossy. Lice upon the Holy Apis would have seemed to an Egyptian a profanation of the deepest dye, one which he could scarcely imagine the gods allowing. Such an affliction upon the sacred beasts generally would have caused a suspicion that Egypt was altogether deserted by her deities, and had nothing to expect but ruin.

However, this plague, like the others, endured for a time only, after which it passed away. There was no sudden, perhaps no complete, removal of it; but it slackened and gradually died

[1] Josephus, "Ant. Jud." ii. 14. § 3.

out. An interval of repose followed, the length of which we have no means of estimating; and then a fresh fiat went forth from Jehovah which resulted in

THE FOURTH PLAGUE.

Pharaoh had once more "gone forth to the water" (Exod. viii. 20), to celebrate, as it would seem, another Nile festival. The time was early morning, perhaps while the opal tints still held possession of the sky, and before the rosy fingers of the dawn had meddled with them. The silence and freshness of the hour had a peculiar charm, and Pharaoh, with his attendant priests and courtiers, may have been sensible of it. The bitterness of death seemed to be past; calm had succeeded storm. Surely Egypt had suffered enough affliction, and was now about to enjoy a time of repose. To the dismay of the king and the Court, the profound silence is suddenly broken by the familiar, and now hated, cry: "Thus saith Jehovah, Let My people go, that they may serve Me." The importunate Hebrews, Moses and Aaron, are there before the king, and break in upon his intended ceremonial with their unaltered, unalterable request. And with the request is coupled a threat: "Else, if thou wilt not let My people go, behold, I will send the *'arôb* upon thee, and upon thy servants, and upon thy people; and the houses of the Egyptians shall be full of the *'arôb*, and also the ground whereon they are. . . . And I will put a division between My people and thy people. To-morrow shall this sign be" (vers. 21–23).

From the way in which the threat is expressed we must conclude that "the *'arôb* was a well-known and terrible pest. Possibly it was a particular kind of fly, since the LXX. translate the Hebrew word by κυνόμυια, "dog-fly" (*Musca canina*). But more probably it was a peculiarly destructive beetle. There is in Egypt a sort of beetle, the *Blatta orientalis* or Kakerlaque, which from time to time appears suddenly in great multitudes, and constitutes a plague of a very marked character. "Ceux qui ont voyagé sur le Nil," says Munk,[1] "savent combien cet insecte est incommode; les bateaux en sont infestés, et on les voit souvent en milliers." "They inflict," says Kalisch,[2] "very painful bites with their jaws; gnaw and destroy clothes, household furniture, leather, and articles of every kind, and either

[1] "Palestine," p. [illegible]. [2] Commentary on Exodus, ii. 20-24.

consume or render unavailable all eatables." The beetles everywhere covered the ground (ver. 21), as the frogs had done; they swarmed into the houses (ver. 24); they destroyed the produce of the land (ver. 24). Pharaoh's palace was not exempt from their intrusion: its goodly furniture became their prey; its dainty viands were covered with their dark and hideous forms. Being beetles, they were sacred, emblems of the Sun, and emanations from his effulgence, types of creative power, representatives of Khepra, the Sun-god considered as Creator, who was commonly figured under the form of a beetle, or as a man with a beetle for his head. It was therefore unlawful to destroy them, and their ravages had to be submitted to unresistingly. He who crushed a beetle crushed a god, and must expect to be pursued by the Divine vengeance during the remainder of his life. So the Egyptians had to "suffer and be still."

A peculiar feature of the Fourth Plague was the exemption of the Israelites from the calamity. Hitherto they had suffered in common with their oppressors, if not to the same extent. Now God announced that He would "put a division" between His people and the people of Pharaoh; Israel should not be involved in the afflictions of Egypt; He would show His power by "severing" between the land of Goshen and the rest of the Egyptian territory (ver. 22). It is possible that this new feature impressed the Pharaoh in a peculiar way. He may have thought hitherto that Jehovah could not proceed to extremities with him and his people without involving His own worshippers in the common destruction. Now it had become apparent that this was not so. A line of demarcation could be, had been, drawn. Jehovah could, and would, protect His own; Egypt might be destroyed and Israel left untouched. The Pharaoh, at any rate, now relented for the second time. He summoned Moses and Aaron into his presence, and addressed them with the words: "Go ye, sacrifice to the Lord your God in the land" (ver. 25). It was not a full compliance with their request, as on the former occasion (ver. 8), but the suggestion of a compromise. He would permit them to offer the sacrifice which they desired, but they must offer it "in the land"—*i.e.*, within the limits of the Egyptian territory. Then there would be no danger of his losing his bond-slaves' services; for their every movement would be watched, and the exits of the land

would be guarded. But the compromise has no attraction for Moses, who unhesitatingly rejects it. There must be no bargaining between man and God. God has declared His will—the Israelites are to have leave to go a three days' journey into the wilderness, and there, beyond the limits of Egypt, to offer their sacrifice. No less than this will be accepted. And Moses now assigns a reason. He and his people will have to sacrifice animals which the Egyptians regard as holy, and under no circumstances to be put to death. The result will be a riot, a bloody conflict, an attempt to stone the chieftains of the Israelites, leading on, perhaps, to a war between the two nations. The reason is so cogent that the Pharaoh cannot but yield to it: he will let them go, then, he says, beyond the borders, into the wilderness—only they must not go very far away; and Moses must at once prevail on Jehovah to remove the plague (ver. 28). Moses consents, and at his prayer the plague is on the morrow completely and entirely removed—not one *'arôb* remained within the Egyptian coasts (ver. 31). Then, as before, Pharaoh "hardened his heart," fled from his word, and revoked the permission which he had given for the Israelites' departure.

The Fifth Plague

is the immediate punishment of Pharaoh's obduracy and untruthfulness. It is a murrain of a very grievous kind upon the domesticated animals in general, "upon the horses, upon the asses, upon the camels, upon the oxen, and upon the sheep" (Exod. ix. 3). Though Egypt was in the main an agricultural country, yet the wealth of its rich men consisted largely in the number of their cattle and other animals. A single individual appears in one instance as the possessor of above a thousand cows and oxen, besides 2,235 goats, 974 sheep, and 750 asses.[1] The king himself owned flocks and herds of a large size (Gen. xlvii. 6). The cattle at the time of the inundation were conveyed to the towns and villages, where they were sheltered in stables or sheds, but during the rest of the year they were "in the field," either feeding freely or engaged in agricultural operations. The horses would be mostly in stables, though some were probably employed in agriculture, and others may have been "out at grass."

[1] Lepsius, "Denkmäler," vol. iii. pl. 9.

Murrains in Egypt are often very violent. They commonly begin in November or December, when, after the subsidence of the inundation, the cattle are turned out into the fields and have free access suddenly to abundance of green food. There were severe murrains in the years 1842, 1863, and 1866, in which last-named year nearly the whole of the herds were destroyed. It is not usual, however, for such visitations to attack the various kinds of domestic animals at once, and the fact that on this occasion the plague was indiscriminate, together with its severity (ver. 6), and its prediction for a definite day (ver. 5), marked the miraculous character of the affliction. All over the land, from the eastern frontier, where camels were bred and nourished for the trade with Syria and Arabia, to the extreme west, where Egypt melted into Libya, and thence for nearly a thousand miles up the Nile valley to the First Cataract, disease hung in the air; the moans of the cattle were heard, the horses of the great, the asses of the poor, staggered, sank, perished. Everywhere was distress, impoverishment, ruin. The previous afflictions had been disgusting, annoying, painful, but only to a very small extent destructive of property. This attacked a main source of the national wealth; this reduced to poverty many a great landowner, threw out of employment thousands of herdsmen, produced distress and complaining all over the land from one end to the other. It showed, moreover, that life and death were in the hands of Him with whom the Pharaoh had to do, and was a warning that, unless Israel were let go, the wrath of Jehovah, which was now smiting the beasts, might be turned against his human creatures. And this plague, like the last, was aggravated by the knowledge that Israel was exempt from it. Across the invisible boundary-line which God had drawn between Egypt Proper and Goshen (Exod. viii. 22) not a beast was sick or ailing. Pharaoh could not believe that it would be so, and therefore sent men to see and inquire, who brought him back word that of the cattle of the children of Israel there had died not one. All in Goshen went on as usual; there was no distress, no anxiety. As of old, "their oxen were strong to labour; there was no decay; their sheep brought forth thousands and ten thousands in their streets" (Psa. cxliv. 13, 14). The power of God stopped the epidemic at a certain line, saying to it with irresistible might: "Thus far shalt thou go, and no further."

Moreover, this plague, like the others, smote the religion of Egypt. Cows, or at any rate white cows, were sacred to Isis, and objects of popular veneration. Goats were worshipped at Mendes, and sheep at Thebes. It was a grief to the Egyptians when any of the sacred animals died. Vast numbers of them dying at one and the same time would amount to a national calamity. If the plague fell on any of those specially sacred beasts which were regarded as actual incarnations of particular gods, on the Apis-Bull maintained at Memphis, or the Mnevis-Bull of Heliopolis, or the White Cow of Momemphis, the religious horror caused by the plague would beyond a doubt have been greatly intensified; and it has been supposed that they all "perished together" in this murrain[1]: but there is no evidence of any such destruction.[2] Rather, as the plague appears to have been limited to the beasts that were "in the field" (Exod. ix. 3), and the incarnation-gods were, all of them, kept under shelter in the main buildings or in the precincts of sanctuaries, we must regard them as having escaped the affliction. Had it been otherwise, the Pharaoh would scarcely have been so little impressed as he was; we should have found him sending for Moses and Aaron and entreating to have the plague stopped. His actual behaviour is the exact contrary. He takes no notice, makes no appeal, but simply hardens his heart, and will not let the people go (ver. 7).

Thus, a further affliction becomes necessary, if Pharaoh is not to triumph; and so the two brothers receive a Divine command to take such steps as are to bring about

The Sixth Plague.

The command is, that they shall "take ashes of the furnace," and that Moses shall "sprinkle it toward the heaven in the sight of Pharaoh;" and the ashes, it is said, are to become "small dust to all the land of Egypt," and to be "a boil breaking forth with blains upon man and upon beast, throughout all the land of Egypt" (ver. 9). As water, and earth, and air had been made to bring forth scourges to chastise the pride of Pharaoh, so now a plague was brought forth, as it were, from

[1] See Millington, "Signs and Wonders in the Land of Ham," p. 108.

[2] The judgments upon the gods of Egypt, mentioned in Num. xxxiii. 4, are more likely to have been effected by the sixth and tenth plagues than by the fifth.

fire. Ashes of the furnace, the crumbling remains of the fuel wherewith a furnace had been heated, were taken up into his hand by Moses and tossed on high into the air, to be carried hither and thither by the winds of heaven; and these ashes, wherever they fell, bred disease, caused an inflamed boil to form itself, which broke out into pustules, and produced much pain and suffering. The magicians, who still watched the miracles of Moses, though they had for some time given up attempting to imitate them, were unable to stand before him by reason of the boils, which fell upon them with such severity that they had to quit the Court and retire to their houses. And the affliction, in one degree or another, was universal—"the boil was upon all the Egyptians" (ver. 11)—every one of them suffered from it. It may also have been upon all the beasts, though this is not stated, the human suffering occupying the mind of the writer of Exodus almost to the exclusion of all thought of the animals. If, however, it was universal, then the actual gods of Egypt must now have begun to suffer those judgments which, in the Book of Numbers (chap. xxxiii. 4), Jehovah is said to have executed upon them. Even if it was not universal, still some of them may have suffered; for the light ash, borne everywhere by the wind, would have penetrated into temple precincts as readily as into fields or pastures.

The sixth plague was not tentative, but simply judicial, sent without warning, like the third, a visitation provoked by the pride and obstinacy of the Pharaoh, who had taken no notice at all of the preceding affliction.

The sixth plague made no more impression upon the Pharaoh than the fifth. His heart continued hard, as hard as the nether mill-stone (Job xli. 24). Moses was therefore instructed to give him warning of a further plague, and to preface his warning by a long and solemn exhortation. "The Lord said unto Moses, Rise up early in the morning, and stand before Pharaoh, and say unto him, Thus saith the Lord God of the Hebrews, Let My people go, that they may serve Me. For I will at this time *send all my plagues upon thy heart, and upon thy servants, and upon thy people*, that thou mayest know that there is none like Me in all the earth. For now might I have stretched forth My hand, and smitten thee and thy people with pestilence, and then thou hadst been cut off from the earth; but truly for this cause have I made thee to stand, for to show thee My power, and that My

name may be declared throughout all the earth. Dost thou still exalt thyself against My people, that thou wilt not let them go? Behold, to-morrow about this time I will cause it to rain a very grievous hail, such as hath not been in Egypt since the foundation thereof, even until now. Send, therefore, now, and gather thy cattle, and all that thou hast in the field; for upon every man and beast which shall be found in the field, and shall not be brought home, the hail shall come down upon them, that they shall die" (Exod. ix. 13–19). The warning is given, but it has no effect—the Pharaoh utters no entreaty, makes no promise, expresses no sorrow for the past, no intention of doing better in the future. It does not bend his will to be reminded that God might even now have swept him and his people from the earth (ver. 15); it does not break his pride to be told that God is about to "send all His plagues upon his heart" (ver. 14). And, therefore,

The Seventh Plague

falls. Moses stretches forth his rod toward the heaven, and God sends thunder and hail, and fire that "runs along upon the ground" (ver. 23); there is "hail, and fire mingled with the hail, very grievous, such as there was none like it in all the land of Egypt since it became a nation" (ver. 24). Josephus says it was "a hail, not only such as the climate of Egypt had never previously witnessed, but such as had not even been ever experienced, in time of winter or at the point of spring, in those northern and arctic lands which were accustomed to the visitation."[1] The Hebrew poets describe it in language of extraordinary force: "The Lord also thundered in the heavens; and the Highest gave His voice; hailstones and coals of fire" (Ps. xviii. 13); "He gave them hail for rain, and flaming fire in their land" (Ps. cv. 32); "He destroyed their vines with hail, and their sycomore trees with frost; He gave up their cattle also to the hail, and their flocks to hot thunderbolts" (Ps. lxxviii. 47, 48). Terrible must have been the commotion, both in earth and heaven. As Moses raised his rod, the sky grew black; the wind rose and roared; vast hosts of clouds assembled and collided in the upper air; the lightning flashed from rank to rank; the thunder crackled, and crashed, and boomed, and filled the whole canopy of heaven with its echoes. Not only did

[1] "Ant. Jud." ii. 14, § 4.

the electric fluid pass in vivid flashes from cloud to cloud, or from sky to earth, but collecting itself into masses, here it "ran along the ground," there it was "as a fire infolding itself" (ver. 24), quivering and remaining fixed for a time, as "fire-balls" do on the masts and yards of ships, then gliding away or dispersing. The hailstones must have been of extraordinary size. Probably they were those rough, jagged pieces of ice such as sometimes fall in Europe in great hailstorms, which have been known to weigh from six ounces to half a pound. The destruction caused by the plague was immense. The flax and barley crops, which were the most advanced, were cut down and totally destroyed; the tender twigs of the fruit-trees were crushed, battered, and broken off, all promise of fruit for the ensuing year being thus swept away. The other crops and the garden vegetables must have suffered greatly. But the damage was not confined to the vegetable world. Any cattle that the Egyptians had still left them, which they had not removed from the fields and placed under shelter, was so smitten and bruised by the hailstones that it died; and even the herdsmen, who were exposed to the full brunt of the storm, were in many cases wounded to their death. The plague was thus threefold in its incidence; it fell "upon man, and upon beast, and upon every herb of the field" (ver. 22); it half ruined the harvest; it swept off most of the remaining cattle, and it slew a certain number of the men. Little by little God had advanced from visitations that were mere annoyances (the frogs, the lice, the beetles) to those that inflicted serious injury on person and property (the murrain, the boils); now He struck at life itself. Dead and dying men lay about the fields and pastures and the lesson was borne in on all, that, if God were much longer defied, He might send a pestilence that would cut off half the nation (ver. 15).

And, while Egypt thus suffered, Goshen was once more wholly exempt from calamity. "In the land of Goshen was there no hail" (ver. 26). The clouds turned away when they reached the borders of the land of God's people, or held their weapons in reserve as they passed over it. Not a blade of grass was hurt, not a stalk of barley was injured. The Lord Jehovah, the shelter and defence of Jacob, "stood round about His people, and delivered them."

Thus, this plague was marvellously impressive from every

point of view Hail was scarcely known in Egypt; thunder and lightning were rare; while such a hail and thunderstorm as this had been would have riveted attention, and have been felt to be most extraordinary, anywhere. The storm had been foretold, and exactly limited to a particular time—"To-morrow about this time" (ver. 18). The extreme severity had been predicted (ver. 19)—God had declared that it would be fatal both to man and beast. It had come at the time fixed, upon the stretching forth of Moses' hand toward heaven; it had spared Goshen; it had visited all Egypt; it had produced all the effects laid down beforehand. No wonder that the Pharaoh was now for the third time impressed, and impressed more deeply than he had been previously. It was now that he first admitted himself to have been in the wrong, it was now that he first acknowledged that he was justly punished: "I have sinned," he said, "this time; the Lord is righteous, and I and my people are wicked" (ver. 27). "Intreat the Lord (for it is enough) that there be no more mighty thunderings, nor hail; and I will let you go, and ye shall stay no longer" (ver. 28). No compromise was now suggested, no condition imposed, no desire even expressed, that they would not "go very far away" (chap. viii. 28). The promise given was as explicit as words could make it—"I will let you go—ye shall stay no longer." For the time the spirit of the king seems to have been really humbled and bowed down. He felt his nothingness; he felt his sinfulness; he abased himself and consented to Moses' request, probably without *arrière pensée*, intending to keep his word. Moses, though he had no faith in the continuance of the king's mood, and though he even went so far as to express his distrust (chap. ix. 30), allowed himself to be prevailed upon by the earnestness of the king's entreaties, and, quitting the shelter of the city while the storm still raged around him, went forth into the midst of it and prayed to God, and the storm ceased (ver. 33).

Then the king went from his word once more. "When Pharaoh saw that the rain, and the hail, and the thunder were ceased, he sinned yet more, and hardened his heart, he *and his servants*. And the heart of Pharaoh was hardened, neither would he let the children of Israel go; as the Lord had spoken by Moses."

The end was now approaching. Pharaoh's obduracy had

grown worse and worse. He had added to the sin of cruelty the sin of disobedience, and to the sin of disobedience the unkingly sin of falseness. He had raised hopes only to disappoint them; he had made submission to God only to shake off his submission and resume his rebellious attitude. God might well now have sent the last plague, which was to break him down absolutely beneath the weight of its affliction, and cause him to "thrust the Hebrews out" (Exod. xi. 1). But it was His merciful decision to give the obdurate monarch two more chances of repenting, two more warnings before the final blow was dealt; and accordingly Moses and Aaron were instructed to seek the Pharaoh's presence once more, and to announce to him, in emphatic terms,

The Eighth Plague.

"Moses and Aaron came in unto Pharaoh, and said unto him, Thus saith the Lord God of the Hebrews, How long wilt thou refuse to humble thyself before Me? Let My people go that they may serve Me. Else, if thou refuse to let My people go, behold, to-morrow I will bring the locusts into thy coast; and they shall cover the face of the earth, that one cannot be able to see the earth; and they shall eat the residue of that which is escaped, which remaineth unto you from the hail, and shall eat every green tree which groweth for you out of the field; and they shall fill thy houses, and the houses of thy servants, and the houses of all the Egyptians; which neither thy fathers, nor thy father's fathers have seen, since the day that they were upon the earth unto this day" (Exod. x. 3–6). The threat was clear, distinct, very intelligible. The Egyptians well knew what a pest the locust could be, what terrible devastation it could effect in a few days, or even in a few hours. Though only one reference has been found to their ravages in the native records, yet it is certain that Egypt must always have been subject to incursions of them, since Syria and Arabia, adjacent countries, are special homes of the locust. Hence the threat produced an unusual effect, not however upon the Pharaoh, but upon his courtiers. They at once realized the terrible character of the scourge, and the dire results which would follow, if after the destruction wrought by the hail, the residue of the harvest and of the vegetation generally should be eaten up by locusts. Accordingly, the courtiers now for the first time interposed, and endeavoured to induce the king to yield. "Pharaoh's servants said unto him, How long

shall this [illegible] (Moses) be a snare unto us? Let the men [illegible] that they may serve the Lord their God. Knowest thou not yet that Egypt is destroyed" (ver. 7)? Better, far better, they thought, to lose the services, even of half a million of bondsmen, than to have Egypt ruined, impoverished to a fearful extent. And the Pharaoh is so far impressed by their representations, that he sends for Moses and Aaron, and for the second time offers a compromise—"Go, serve the Lord, but who are they that shall go?" The point had not been raised hitherto. It had been fully understood that the demand was general—"Let *My people* go." But the Pharaoh now attempts to set a limit of number, as he had before attempted to set a limit of distance (Exod. viii. 25, 28). "Go," he says, "ye that are men," but think not that I will let you go, "*and your little ones*," or "with your households." No; they must remain, a pledge for your return. Again, the compromise proposed is disallowed. "We will go," Moses declared, "with our young and with our old, with our sons and with our daughters, with our flocks and with our herds; for we must hold a feast unto the Lord" (ver. 9). The Pharaoh, exasperated, had Moses and Aaron driven from his presence (ver. 11); and then the plague fell in all its terrible intensity. The locusts came in their myriads; they covered and hid the ground, which their brown forms "darkened" (ver. 15); they settled on every herb of the field that the hail had left, on the wheat and rye crops, on the esculent grasses, on the clover and lupines and lentils, on the garlic and onions and leeks and gourds and cucumbers, and further upon the fruit-trees—the date-bearing palms, the figs, the pomegranates, mulberries, vines, olives, peach, pear, plum, and apple-trees—they ate the fruit where it was formed, the blossoms, the buds, the leaves, the bark, and even the more tender twigs: they utterly destroyed every green thing; where the land was as the garden of Eden before them, behind them it was a desolate wilderness. And, besides, they were in the houses, which they "filled" (ver. 6). It was as at Novgorod in the year 1646, where an intelligent traveller thus describes the visitation: "The ground was all covered, and the air so full of them that I could not eat in my chamber without a candle, all the houses being full of them, even the stables, barns, chambers, garrets, and cellars. I caused cannon-powder and sulphur to be burnt to expel them, but all to no purpose; for when the door was

opened, an infinite number came in, and the others went fluttering about; and it was a troublesome thing, when a man went abroad, to be hit on the face by these creatures, on the nose, eyes, or cheeks, so that there was no opening one's mouth but some would get in. Yet all this was nothing; for when we were to eat, they gave us no respite; and when we went to cut a piece of meat, we cut a locust with it, and when a man opened his mouth to put in a morsel, he was sure to chew one of them."[1]

The infliction was more than even the Pharaoh could bear; and, though he had just before had Moses and Aaron driven from his presence (ver. 11), he now again sent for them "in haste," and piteously intreated for pardon, and for the removal of the scourge. "I have sinned," he said, "against the Lord your God, and against you; now, therefore, forgive, I pray thee, my sin only this once, and intreat the Lord your God, that He may take away from me this death only" (vers. 16, 17). Once more Moses complied; once more God was intreated; and then the ordinary result followed—the Pharaoh's heart was hardened, and he would not let the people go (ver. 20).

The Ninth Plague

now came, like the third and the sixth, without warning. "The Lord said unto Moses, Stretch out thine hand toward heaven, that there may be darkness over the land of Egypt, even darkness *which may be felt*. And Moses stretched forth his hand toward heaven; and there was a thick darkness in all the land of Egypt three days: they saw not one another, neither rose any from his place for three days; but all the children of Israel had light in their dwellings" (Exod. x. 21–23). We are not told how the darkness was produced, and no theory on the subject can be more than a conjecture. The general supposition of scholars and historians has been, that the natural phenomena of the Khamsîn wind, which frequently blows in Egypt soon after the vernal equinox, were by miracle so aggravated as to produce the effects described—a darkness that was total, that seemed to envelop men and press upon them, and that made it impossible for them to move about in it. Whatever the cause, the effect was awful in the extreme. A great horror of thick darkness fell upon

[1] Beauplan, quoted by Dr. Pusey in his "Minor Prophets, with a Commentary," p. 117.

the whole people. Man could not see his fellow. Each stayed where he was, since he did not know which way to turn, or whither he could direct his steps to any purpose. Men's hearts must have failed them for fear, and the end of the world must have been expected. The darkness continued for three days. Let the reader imagine three entire days—seventy-two hours—without a single gleam of light! How would nervous souls be terrified! How would sensitive imaginations breed gloomy and horrible phantasms! How would sinful souls tremble with alarm! Artificial light they seem to have had none, whether the power of producing it was stopped by miracle, or whether the terror that was upon them was too great for them to dare to move. At length, after three days, the darkness passed off—the light of the sun was seen. Ra, it was found, had not fallen from his place in the heavens, or been absorbed and extinguished in the primeval darkness. Nature returned to her old course, and nothing remained of the visitation but the recollection of it. The recollection was, however, sufficient to move the proud heart of the Pharaoh to a fresh concession. He sent for Moses, and said: "Go ye, serve the Lord; only let your flocks and your herds be stayed; let your little ones (families) also go with you" (ver. 24). All Israel—the whole nation—might depart, might take their three days' journey into the wilderness, and there hold their festival; only they must consent to one thing—they must leave behind them their flocks and their herds; then the Pharaoh would feel tolerably sure of their returning; they would not be content to lose the main source of their wealth, and so he would not lose their services.

The argument was valid, the plan not wanting in sagacity; but the craft of Pharaoh was ill-matched against the downright straightforwardness of Moses. Moses would have none of his compromises. Moses saw through his scheme at once, and met his offer with the plainest and most absolute refusal. "Thou must give us also sacrifices and burnt-offerings," he replied, "that we may sacrifice unto the Lord our God. Our cattle also shall go with us; *there shall not an hoof be left behind.*" And he added a reason, which was unanswerable—"For thereof must we take to serve the Lord our God; and we know not with what we must serve the Lord until we come thither" (ver. 26). The feast was a new thing; its ritual was unknown; there would be sacrifices to be offered doubtless; but as yet the Israelites did

not know what animals, or how many of each, would be required of them. They must therefore take all their cattle. As Pharaoh cannot meet the reasoning, he falls in a rage, bids Moses quit his presence forthwith, and threatens him with death if he again comes into his sight. Moses, though deeply angered (Exod. xi. 8), indignant at such rude and scornful treatment, restrains himself, and answers with dignified calmness—"Thou hast spoken well, I will see thy face again no more" (Exod. x. 29), but before quitting the presence, he lodges a Parthian dart in the breast of his adversary, by threatening him with the last and worst of all the plagues—the death of the first-born (Exod. xi. 4–8).

Here, we may note the great change which had been wrought in the character of Moses by the circumstances of his long struggle on behalf of his people. At its commencement, he was timid, diffident, distrustful of his powers, hopeless of any good result, easily cowed, patient of affronts and insults. Now he is firm, resolute, self-reliant, self-assertive, may we not say, eloquent? No wonder that he was "very great" in the eyes both of the great officers of Pharaoh's court and of the people (ver. 3). He had withstood and baffled the magicians; he had withstood Pharaoh; he had never blenched nor wavered; he had never lost his temper. With a calm, equable, unfailing persistence, he had gone on preferring the same demand, threatening punishments if it were not granted, inflicting them, and removing them on the slightest show of repentance and relenting. He had thus won the respect both of the upper classes and of the common people, as much as the Pharaoh had lost it, and was now looked up to and regarded with feelings of general admiration and approval. The utterance with which he wound up his long contest with the Pharaoh, and finally quitted his presence, is a model of dignified speech: "Thou hast spoken well; I will see thy face no more. But thus saith the Lord, About midnight will I go out into the midst of Egypt, and all the first-born in the land of Egypt shall die, from the first-born of Pharaoh that sitteth upon his throne, even unto the first-born of the maidservant that is behind the mill; and all the first-born of beasts. And there shall be a great cry throughout all the land of Egypt, such as there was none like it, nor shall be like it any more. But against any of the children of Israel shall not a dog move his tongue, against man or beast; that ye may know how that the Lord doth

put a difference between the Egyptians and Israel. And all these thy servants shall come down unto me, and bow down themselves unto me, saying, Get thee out, and all the people that follow thee; and after that, I will go out" (Exod. x. 29; xi. 4–8).

The Tenth Plague.

An interval of some duration seems to have separated between the announcement of the Tenth Plague and its actual infliction.[1] Time was needed by Moses to make the necessary preparations for the simultaneous departure of the Israelites from all the various parts of Egypt which they occupied, and for their convergence towards a fixed locality. Pharaoh and his people had to be allowed time to brood over the threat launched against them, and to realize its terrible import, if so be that they might take it to heart, and at the eleventh hour yield to God's will and so escape the calamity. The hour fixed for the plague was midnight (Exod. xi. 4); but which midnight was left indeterminate, the horror of the menace being increased by the vagueness of it. In the interval Moses received instructions to institute that Passover Feast which remains to this day an enduring memorial of the Exodus, inexplicable except as the commemoration of a historical fact, and testifying by its name to the nature of the fact commemorated. God willed that the deliverance which He was about to give should be accompanied, and thenceforth kept in mind, by a ceremony which He now instituted, and of which He commanded the constant observance. Each householder was to assemble his family round him; all were to be prepared as for a journey, their long garments girt up about their loins, their shoes on their feet, and their staffs in their hands; a lamb was to be sacrificed, and the blood to be splashed on the lintels and the two door-posts of the houses; then the lamb was to be roasted and unleavened bread hastily prepared to eat with it; and the households were to wait in silent expectation. At midnight the destroying angel was to go through the entire land of Egypt, smiting in each house the first-born, but "passing over" the houses on which the blood of the lamb was sprinkled. Then a cry would be heard, and hurrying messengers burst in from Pharaoh, requiring all to "go forth, and begone from among his people;" and the meal prepared was to be snatched in hot haste, and eaten standing, and

[1] See the "Speaker's Commentary," vol. i. p. 291.

then the journey was to begin. All had to be explained beforehand by Moses, and all arranged beforehand; the households had to be got ready, the beasts to be laden, the household goods, or such as were most necessary, to be packed, the people to ask for farewell presents from their well-to-do Egyptian neighbours, and all to be in preparation for an immediate start.

Thus the two nations waited—on the one hand, the Egyptians in perplexity and anxious doubt, depressed by the long series of calamities which had fallen upon themselves and upon their country, not knowing when a new calamity would fall, or what exactly the new calamity would be; shaken from their established trusts and time-honoured beliefs by the marvels which they had witnessed; disappointed in their king; disappointed in their master-magicians, disappointed in their priests, who had not even availed to save their gods from suffering—and, on the other hand, the Israelites, expectant, elated, confident, that the time approached for their final deliverance from the "furnace" of the Egyptian affliction, full of hope and full of resolution, sure of a leader who had never failed them, and fully prepared by him for the events which were about to happen. Both nations waited, and at last the blow fell. At midnight of the fourteenth of Nisan, the Lord went forth, and "smote all the first-born in the land of Egypt, from the first-born of Pharaoh that sat on his throne, unto the first-born of the captive that was in the dungeon; and all the first-born of beasts. And Pharaoh rose up in the night, he, and all his servants, and all the Egyptians; and there was a great cry in Egypt, for there was not a house where there was not one dead" (Exod. xii. 29, 30). The cry was "the loud, frantic, funeral wail, characteristic of the nation."[1] It went up from the royal palace, from the grand mansions of the rich and noble, from the small but tidy dwellings of the artisans, from the mean and wretched huts of the poor—one universal piercing bitter wail, making night hideous and thrilling through every ear. All Israel heard it, and knew that the time of their redemption drew nigh. All Egypt heard it, and resolved to send the people through whom they suffered out of the land. Pharaoh heard it, and proceeded to "thrust Israel out." His own first-born, the heir to his crown, the *Erpa suten sa*, or "Hereditary Crown Prince" was, it must be remembered, dead. He

[1] Stanley, "Lectures on the Jewish Church," vol. i. p. 120.

sent a message to Moses and Aaron "by night," saying—"Rise up, and get you forth from among my people, both ye and the children of Israel; and go, serve the Lord, as ye have said. Also take your flocks and your herds, as ye have said, and be gone; and bless me also" (vers. 31, 32).

It was an utter surrender, a yielding up of everything. The long struggle had terminated in the complete triumph of Moses. Pharaoh yielded all that had been ever asked, and added the self-imposed humiliation of craving the blessing on him of the two brothers, whom for nearly a year he had opposed, vexed, thwarted, harassed, and insulted. "Bless me also." It showed an entire distrust of his own priesthood and of his own deities, when the Pharaoh submitted to ask humbly of the priests of an alien god, that before quitting his country they would condescend to give him their blessing. For the moment, at any rate, the Pharaoh's pride was utterly bowed down—he trailed his regal garments in the dust—he subordinated himself and the throne of his ancestors and predecessors for forty generations to a couple of Hebrews, his own slaves, to whom ten months before he had wholly refused to listen (Exod. v. 1–4).

CHAPTER X.

THE PASSAGE OF THE RED SEA.

The gathering—The number that came together—The halt at Succoth—Change in the direction of the march—Encampment at Migdol—Peril of the position and faith of Moses—Regret of Pharaoh—His pursuit of Israel—Terror of the Israelites—Movement of the Pillar of the Cloud—Passage of the sea by Israel—The Egyptians pursue—Their difficulties—Destruction of the entire army—Completeness of the deliverance—Credit which attaches to Moses in respect of it—Moses' Song of Triumph.

THE Israelites set out at early dawn on the fifteenth of Nisan. Moses had no need to give any signal, or to send his orders by messengers; for by fixing the Passover Feast for a definite day, and requiring that after eating it none should go forth "until the morning" (Exod. xii. 22), he had made all acquainted with the day and hour of departure; he had also caused all to be prepared for setting forth; and, if any had been inclined to linger, the Egyptians themselves would not have allowed it; for they "were urgent upon the people, that they might send them out of the land in haste; for they said, We be all dead men" (ver. 33). Thus an almost simultaneous departure was secured. From the various points at which the Israelites were settled, extending, we conceive, from Memphis towards the south to Tanis and Pelusium on the north, columns went forth in orderly array, all streaming in converging lines towards one point, the place fixed for the rendezvous—the land of Thukot or Succoth. The largest company took its departure from Rameses-Tanis under the conduct of Moses and Aaron. This company proceeded south-eastward, and would reach Succoth,

to the north-west of Lake Timseh, in about three marches. Other companies flowed in from the north, the west, and the south, till the whole people was gathered together in one—six hundred thousand men, according to the existing text, together with their families.

It has been thought by some that this number is a corruption, or an exaggeration. The theory of a corruption seems to most critics to be precluded by the detailed statements in the first chapter of the Book of Numbers, where the exact number of each tribe is given, and the sum total of the adult males reckoned at 603,550 (Numb. i. 46). Exaggeration is precluded, if we admit the number to belong to the original document, not merely by the theory of inspiration, but by the entire character of Moses, and by the absence of any motive for such misrepresentation. The fewer that the Israelites had been, the greater the glory that would have attached to their defying and baffling the mighty nation of the Egyptians. Consequently, the more candid of modern critics, as Ewald, Dean Stanley, Kalisch, and Kurtz, take no exception to the number given in the text of Exodus, but base upon it a calculation that the entire body of emigrants must have somewhat exceeded two millions. No doubt, as Dean Stanley says,[1] "It is difficult for us to conceive the migration of a whole nation" under the circumstances narrated. But, as he also notes, we have an illustration of its possibility even in the history of the last century, which records the sudden departure, under cover of a single night, of a whole nomadic people—400,000 Tartars—who withdrew themselves from Russia and made their way over several thousand miles of steppe from the banks of the Wolga to the confines of the Chinese Empire.[2] And the great caravans of pilgrims, which even now traverse the East, without confusion or disorder, give something like a picture, on a small scale, of the movements of such a host as that led forth by Moses. They are marshalled and arranged by the caravan-leader—each company knows its place—they encamp and break up from their encampments silently and in an orderly way; they have each their train of animals; they traverse long distances in a fairly compact body—once started they pursue their way with a regularity and an absence of confusion, that leaves little to be

[1] "Lectures on the Jewish Church," vol. i. p. 124.

[2] Bell's "History of Russia," vol. ii. appendix C.

desired—and they usually accomplish their journeys in the time prescribed, without serious loss, except perhaps of the animals.

The rendezvous, and first resting-place of the host at Succoth, seems to have been in a bosky region, where were found tamarisk, and sycomore, and palm, so that they were able to rest and recruit their strength in "booths" or leafy huts, which afforded shelter from the sun's heat by day and from the cold dews of night. They were nearly at the edge of the cultivated ground; they were perhaps inclined to linger before confronting the hardships of the actual desert. But their energetic leader would not suffer them to rest. The order speedily went forth, that the host was to resume its march, and to follow the course indicated by a "pillar of cloud," which moved miraculously in front of them during the day, and on its stopping pointed out where they were to rest at night. From Succoth the course taken seems to have been towards the north-east. In this direction lay the route ordinarily traversed by Egyptian armies and caravans, when they proceeded from Egypt into Syria, the line running first south of Lake Serbonis, and then along the coast by Raphia and Rhinocolura to Gaza and Ashdod. The family of Jacob had probably travelled to Egypt along this route, and their descendants deemed that they were now about to retrace it. But God had determined otherwise. God knew that the undisciplined and unarmed mass of slaves, which he was leading out of Egypt, was quite unfit to contend against the warlike nation of the Philistines, and had it in his designs to train them and win them gradually, during a long term of years, to military discipline and martial virtue. Ere long, therefore, he changed their course, causing them to make a sudden turn (Exod. xiv. 2) to the south, and to proceed in that direction for several marches, finally encamping before Pi-hahiroth, between Migdol and the Sea, over against Baal-Zephon.

It has been thought that these names point to a northern rather than to a southern locality, and proposed to find them all in the vicinity of Lake Serbonis—that famed "Serbonian bog" which has more than once proved fatal to armies. But the specious arguments employed by the author of this theory never had power to seduce very many, and the question raised by them may be said to have been finally set at rest by the

labours of Ebers, Greville Chester, and Dr. Trumball. It is understood that the great geographer, who originally broached the theory, is no longer inclined to maintain it, or at any rate does not now press it as anything more than a theory. The old belief has consequently re-asserted itself; and the movement of the Israelites from their second halting-place, Etham, may be regarded as almost certainly southward, along the western edge of the Bitter Lakes to the vicinity of Suez. Migdol may be placed at the modern Muktala (which is the old word slightly changed in the vocalization), Pi-hahiroth at Ajrood, and Baal-Zephon on the flanks of Mount Attâkah. Here, in this *cul-de-sac*, with a desert on one side of them, the Red Sea on the other, and the impassable mountain chain of the Jebel Attâkah in the front, the host of Israel took up its position, as commanded, about five or six days after it had set forth.

The position was an extraordinary one, which any leader of ordinary capacity would have avoided, and which, unless divinely commanded, Moses would certainly never have occupied. There was no natural egress from it, except by turning round and retracing one's steps. That egress might easily be blocked. Never was faith more conspicuously shown, than when the Hebrew leader, trusting in God's power to deliver, took his people calmly into a position of such peril. But Moses "knew in whom he had believed." His was that perfect, undoubting, unquestioning trust, which never fails, never wavers; God's word was passed for Israel's deliverance; that word was sure; how the deliverance was to be effected it was for God to determine; Moses felt that he had only to accept God's way. He must, more or less, have expected Pharaoh's coming, since he had been apprised of his feelings concerning the Israelites, and warned that he was following on their footsteps (vers. 3, 4). But he did not allow himself to be troubled. He "put his trust in God, and did not fear what flesh could do unto him." He knew that "they which were with him were more than they which were against him." In God was his hope; he knew that He who keepeth Israel "fainteth not, neither is weary"—"slumbers not nor sleeps."

Meanwhile the Pharaoh had recovered from his first shock of alarm. No more deaths had followed those of the one terrible night. The pestilence, as he no doubt thought it, was stayed. Perhaps, his priests persuaded him that they had

stayed it by their prayers and sacrifices, and that he had now nothing to fear. Moreover, the lapse of time naturally blunted his sorrow and lessened his dread. He had lost his first-born son; but he had, at least, one other son, probably several: and the death of the *Erpa suten sa* threatened no danger to the succession. Thus he was free from any immediate personal anxiety; and, naturally, his thoughts reverted into their accustomed channel. For months he had been resolving with himself that he would not lose the services of his half-million labourers—nothing should induce him to consent to it. But now he had consented, and he was losing them. Israel had quitted their abodes, which stood empty; whole tracts of land were left nearly bare of inhabitants; the labours in the brick-fields had ceased; the works which he had been carrying on were interrupted. Would it be possible ever to resume them? Common sense had told him all along, that, if the Israelites once went forth beyond the borders of Egypt, they would never return thither. And now he would remember that Moses had never pledged himself to a return. And the circumstances of his departure were such as to make a voluntary return almost inconceivable. He and His people had been "thrust out." They had been bidden to quit, told—"Rise up, get you forth, go—take your flocks and your herds, and be gone" (Exod. xii. 31, 32). Parting gifts had been given them, and they had gone forth enriched with all the wealth of Egypt. They had taken with them their wives, their children, their cattle, their beasts, the best of their furniture, their tools and implements. What was there to induce them even to think of returning? As Pharaoh reflected on all that, the idea occurred to him, that, after all, the flight might perhaps be stopped. He and his people were at one on the subject. They too had repented, and had begun to ask themselves—"Why have we done this, that we have let Israel go from serving us?" (Exod. xiv. 5) They were full of regret; they feared lest their own burdens might be increased; they were willing to abet their king in any attempt that he should make to stop the exodus, and recall the fugitives.

When such was the position of affairs, intelligence reached the king, that, instead of quitting his land at Etham, and there entering the wilderness, when they stood upon its verge, the Israelites had made a retrograde movement, had edged off from

the wilderness, clung to the cultivated soil, which gave sustenance to their flocks and herds, and proceeded southwards along the eastern frontier of Egypt, still keeping within the border-line, till they had occupied a position from which it was not easy to see how they could extricate themselves. The wilderness "shut them in" on one side (ver. 3), the Red Sea upon the other; the Jebel Attâkah blocked up further passage to the south. They seemed to him "entangled in the land"—so situated that, if he marched against them, they could not escape, but must submit on any terms that he chose to offer them. He therefore hastily collected such forces as were within reach, and, following up the line of the Israelite retreat, came upon the host still encamped "by the sea, beside Pi-hahiroth, before Baal-Zephon" (ver. 9). "The Israelites were encamped on the western shore of the Red Sea, when suddenly a cry of alarm ran through the vast multitude. Over the ridges of the desert hills were seen the well-known horses, the terrible chariots of the Egyptian host. Pharaoh had pursued after the children of Israel, and they were sore afraid."[1] Pharaoh had gathered together six hundred of his best chariots, a force which constituted the very *élite* of his army: with these were united a large body of the ordinary class of chariots, and a considerable force of foot. It is doubtful whether he was accompanied by any cavalry. The "horses" and "horsemen," or "riders," of Exodus xiv. and xv. are probably the chariot horses and the riders in the chariots, not cavalry soldiers mounted on the backs of steeds.[2] The Egyptians scarcely used cavalry at this period. But the array, whatever it may have been, was sufficient; it was felt to be irresistible. Utter destruction was expected. "Because there were no graves in Egypt, hast thou taken us away to die in the wilderness?" said the spokesman of the host to Moses (ver. 11)—"Wherefore hast thou thus dealt with us, to carry us forth out of Egypt?"

It was indeed a fearful situation, humanly speaking. On the one side was an unarmed and undisciplined host—men, women, and children, cattle, baggage animals intermixed—wholly unprepared for war, ignorant of it, without arms, without train-

[1] Stanley, "Lectures on the Jewish Church," vol. i. p. 127; Philo, "Vit. Mosis," i. 30.

[2] See Hengstenberg, "Ægypten und Mose," pp. 127–129; Denison, "History of Cavalry," pp. 7, 8; "Pulpit Commentary," vol. ii. p. 321.

ing, without discipline. On the other side were the trained bands, the veteran troops, which the great Ramesses had so often led to victory, and which had recently confronted and destroyed the hosts of Marmaiu, son of Deid, who had threatened Egypt with conquest. Let but Pharaoh give the word, and launch his armed force against the unarmed multitude, and how could these latter escape being slaughtered like sheep, falling in heaps upon heaps under the swords, and the bows, and the spears, and the hoofs of the horses, and the chariot wheels? And this fate was what the Israelites fully expected (ver. 12). But Moses had no such fear. In bold strong words he addressed the multitude, and quieted it. "Fear ye not," he said; "stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord, which He will show to you to-day; for the Egyptians whom ye have seen to-day, ye shall see them again no more for ever. The Lord shall fight for you and ye shall hold your peace" (vers. 13, 14). Moses did not even yet know what the manner of the deliverance would be, whether hail would fall and destroy the Egyptian host, or the earth gape and swallow them up, or a pestilence fall upon them and lay them dead in their tents during the night; but he was confident that, in one way or another, Israel would be delivered. Still, as the peril was great and pressing, and only God could give deliverance, Moses, having comforted and encouraged the people, himself turned to God, and "cried to Him" (ver. 15)—cried to Him from the depths of his soul, beseeching His interference. And the cry was promptly answered. The mode of the deliverance was revealed. Immediate safety was secured to the panic-stricken Israelites by a sudden movement of the pillar of the cloud; and the way whereby they were to make their escape was declared in the plainest words.

The Egyptians had arrived on the ridges of the desert hills about sundown, after a long and hasty march, and had then encamped (ver. 20). Their prey was in their sight, and apparently could not escape them. Israel's camp lay below them, directly in their view; every sound that was made in it could be heard, every movement seen. By the passage of the pillar of the cloud from the head of the Israelite column to its rear, and its interposition between the host of Israel and the host of Egypt, this condition of things was wholly changed. A thick darkness spread itself in front of the Egyptian lines—a dark-

ness impenetrable by human eye and felt to be preternatural. Into this murky cloud, which reminded of the plague recently endured, no Egyptian would venture to plunge. Thus Israel was free to act during the night, as if there had been no enemy near. And, while the Egyptian host was thus plunged in deep darkness, the Israelites enjoyed a superabundance of light. The cloud turned to them its "silver lining," and shone with a lustre that changed night into broad day. The orders which Moses gave were easily executed. Divinely instructed (vers. 15–18), he commanded the Israelites to form in column, facing a particular portion of the shore, to load their beasts, bring together their cattle, and have everything in readiness for a start. Then he stood at the head of the column, and stretched out his hand over the sea. At once an east, or south-east, wind arose, and drove the upper water of the shallow bay that lay before him towards the north-west, while probably[1] a strong ebb-tide set in at the same time and drew the lower water southwards, so that the bed of the sea was for a considerable space laid bare. A sort of broad causeway, guarded by water upon either side, was formed, and upon this the column advanced, the pillar of the cloud still lending them its brilliant light and clearly showing them their path. The distance to be traversed may not have been more than a mile, and the entire column may easily have accomplished the passage in five or six hours. As the last Israelites entered the sea-bed, the pillar of the cloud withdrew itself from the shore and followed up the retiring column, protecting it like a rearguard. Then the Egyptians began to see what had happened. Israel had quitted its camping-ground, had entered the sea-bed, and was traversing it—their prey was on the point of escaping them. The sight woke in them a burning anger, and an intense longing for revenge. It was no longer vexation at the loss of so many and such useful labourers, and the desire of recovering them, that formed their animating motive, but sheer rage and malice, with a certain mixture of cupidity. "The enemy said, I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil; my lust shall be satisfied upon them; I will draw my sword; my hand shall destroy them"

[1] The people of Memphis had a tradition to this effect. They said, that Moses, being well acquainted with the district, *watched the ebb of the tide*, and led the people across the dry bed of the sea. (Artapan. ap. Alex. Polyhist. Fr. 14.)

(Exod. xv. 9). Without waiting for orders, as far as appears, they rushed to satiate their lust of carnage and of spoil. "The Egyptians pursued and went in after them to the midst of the sea, even all Pharaoh's horses, his chariots, and his riders" (Exod. xiv. 23). The soft sand and ooze of the sea-bed was unsuited for the passage of chariots; the wheels sank into it up to their axles, and were in consequence clogged,[1] and "made to go heavily." In addition to this, "the Lord looked unto the host of the Egyptians through the pillar of the cloud and of fire, and troubled the host of the Egyptians" (ver. 24). As Josephus explains,[2] "Showers of rain came down from the sky, and dreadful thunders and lightning, with flashes of fire; thunderbolts were also darted upon them; nor was there anything wont to be sent by God upon men as indications of His wrath, which did not happen upon this occasion." A Psalmist thus describes the event—"The clouds poured out water; the skies sent out a sound; Thine arrows also went abroad. The voice of Thy thunder was in the heaven; the lightnings lightened the world; the earth trembled and shook. Thy way is in the sea, and Thy path in the great waters; and Thy footsteps are not known. Thou leddest Thy people like sheep by the hand of Moses and Aaron" (Ps. lxxvii. 17–20).

The result was, that the Egyptian host never came in contact with the Israelites. Before they could do so, God gave a command to Moses to "stretch out his hand over the sea" a second time, "that the waters might come again upon the Egyptians, upon their chariots, and upon their riders" (ver. 26). Moses obeyed, and "the waters returned." From the northern end of the bay, the waters held there by the "strong east (*i.e.*, south-east) wind" came back with a rush so soon as the wind lulled; from the south the flood tide rushed furiously in. Those who know the danger of crossing estuaries (*e.g.*, Morecombe Bay) under an advancing tide, and how easily travellers are under such circumstances lost, will at least partially apprehend the peril of the situation. Here, however, water threatened *on both sides;* the hungry waves rushed in upon either flank, surged, boiled, united their seething waters, and soon went over the heads of the host. Encumbered with their heavy armour, the Egyptian warriors "sank like lead" (Exod. xv. 10) in the

[1] See the Septuagint version of Exod. xiv. 25.

[2] "Ant. Jud." ii. 16, § 3.

angry flood—went to the bottom "as a stone" (ver. 5). The horses, plunging, rearing, mad with fear, struggled wildly, but had to succumb; the chariots stuck fast in the wet sand. In vain the Egyptians "fled against" (Exod. xiv. 27) the advancing tide, when they first saw it coming; tried to race it, and to get to shore before it was upon them. The surge was far swifter than they. Probably the struggle to escape did not occupy half an hour. Before that space of time had elapsed "the waters covered the chariots, and the riders, and all the host of Pharaoh that came into the sea after them; there remained not so much as one of them" when morning fully broke (ver. 28). Later in the day a ghastly mass of floating corpses was borne in by the waves and cast upon the Asiatic coast; and Israel took its last look upon the Egyptians lying "dead upon the sea-shore" (ver. 30).

Mighty, marvellous, and most complete was the deliverance. The army that had pursued Israel was utterly destroyed. The Pharaoh had either perished, or was a disgraced and awe-struck fugitive, never likely to lift a hand against Israel again. The whole Egyptian military force must, when news reached it of what had happened, have become utterly demoralized. Israel had stepped from a position of imminent peril to one of absolute security, so far as Egypt was concerned. They had passed from Africa into Asia, from the Dark Continent into the region of Light, the Land of the Rising Sun, the "Land of Promise." Old things were passed away—all things were become new with them. "Behind the African hills, which rose beyond the Dead Sea, lay the strange land of their exile and bondage—the land of Egypt, with its mighty river, its immense buildings, its monster-worship, its grinding tyranny, its over-grown civilization. This they had left to revisit no more; the Red Sea flowed between them; 'the Egyptians whom they saw yesterday they will now see no more again for ever.' And before them stretched the level plains of the Arabian desert, the desert where their fathers and their kindred had wandered in former times, where their great leader had fed the flocks of Jethro, through which they must advance onwards till they reached the Land of Promise. Further, this change of local situation was at once a change of moral condition. From slaves they had become free; from an oppressed tribe they had become an independent nation. It is their deliverance from slavery. It is the earliest

recorded instance of a great national emancipation."[1] Israel had burst its bondage, had passed through its first great trial in the furnace of affliction, and entered on a new phase of its existence. It was free; it was under direct Divine guidance; to a certain extent, it knew Jehovah; untold possibilities of advance, progress, and usefulness to the world lay before it; in a certain sense it might be said to have "passed from death unto life," from the power of Satan to the free service of God.

The biographer naturally asks, before turning his eye from this great crisis, What was Moses' share in producing the result; how far may it be considered to have been brought about, not only *through*, but *by*, him? If the crisis be compared with those which ordinarily determine the history of nations, there can be no doubt that the part which was played in it by any human agency whatever, must be pronounced to be small. Moses had not to design, or to plan, or to contrive, or to persuade, or to undertake a campaign, or to display any extraordinary activity, or energy, or practical power. The deliverance was of God. "Stand still, and see the salvation of Jehovah," was at once its watchword (Exod. xiv. 13) and its principle. The object of the whole series of transactions, was that God's power might be shown forth, and His name declared throughout all the earth (Exod. ix. 16). It was intended that the Israelites should be compelled to look to Him, and not to themselves, nor to any "arm of flesh," as the source of their triumph. To Moses, therefore, a much smaller proportion of the results achieved under his leadership is to be attributed, than we rightly assign to such active and stirring chiefs, the prime movers in all that they effected, as Joshua, and Gideon, and Samson, and David, and Judas Maccabæus. In the main, he was a passive instrument in God's hand for working out His purposes. Yet, still, he was not merely this. His consciousness was not absorbed, his individuality was not swallowed up. Through the whole struggle with his proud and powerful adversary he showed unwavering firmness, coolness, and strength of mind. In the final scene, the great climax and crisis, he displayed intense faith, profound confidence in God, and a contempt of danger rarely exceeded by any military hero. The dogged perseverance, which, however difficult his task appeared, "bated no jot of heart or hope;" the boldness, which bearded the Pharaoh in the midst of all

[1] Stanley, "Lectures on the Jewish Church," vol. i. p. 128.

his courtiers and lords; the patience, which endured all, and never let itself be driven to any false step; and the firm faith, which nothing could shake—were great qualities, and largely conduced towards the result, which God miraculously brought about. God works through men as instruments; but He fashions His instruments with extreme care, and fits each of them marvellously for the work which He has in hand. "Moses was a man of marvellous gifts, raised up by Divine Providence for the highest purpose to which man could be called."[1] In the crisis at the Red Sea, as in the previous struggle, these gifts were brought into play; and we shall do less than justice to Moses if we do not allow that they had no small share in producing the result.

On finding himself, with his people, safe on the Arabian shore of the Red Sea, the first instinct of Moses was thanksgiving. As in the Christian world each national escape or victory is celebrated by the solemn singing of a *Te Deum*, so was the first deliverance of the Jewish Church commemorated by a song of triumph. Moses composed, and the minstrels of Israel sang, on the day following that wonderful escape, the magnificent psalm, which is at once "the first burst of Hebrew national poesy,"[2] and the pattern Thanksgiving Hymn for the Church of God through all ages. The psalm was sung by "Moses and the children of Israel" (Exod. xv. 1); Miriam and her maidens, accompanying themselves with instruments of music, sang the chorus. The song was as follows:—

I.

Sing unto the Lord, for He hath triumphed gloriously;
The horse and his rider hath He thrown into the sea.

My strength and song is JAH;
And He is to me for salvation.
He is my God, and I will praise Him;
My father's God, and I will exalt Him.

Jehovah is a man of war;
Jehovah is His name.
Pharaoh's chariots and his host hath He cast into the sea;
And his chosen captains are sunk in the Red Sea.
The depths covered them; they sank to the bottom as a stone.

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[1] Stanley in Smith's "Dictionary of the Bible," vol. ii. p. 428.
[2] Stanley, "Lectures on the Jewish Church," vol. i. p. 132.

Chorus by Miriam and her maidens.

Sing unto the Lord, for He hath triumphed gloriously;
The horse and his rider hath He thrown into the sea.

II.

Thy right hand, Jehovah, is glorious in power;
Thy right hand, Jehovah, dasheth in pieces the enemy.
In the greatness of Thy height, Thou overthrowest them that rise up against Thee;
Thou sendest forth Thy wrath, which consumeth them as stubble.

With the blast of Thy nostrils the waters were piled up:
The floods stood up as an heap;
The depths were congealed in the heart of the sea.

The enemy said—'I will pursue, overtake, divide the spoil;
My lust shall be satisfied upon them;
I will draw my sword; my hand shall destroy them.'
Thou didst blow with Thy wind; the sea covered them;
They sank like lead in the mighty waters.

(*Chorus as before.*)

III.

Who is like unto Thee, Jehovah, among the gods?
Who is like unto Thee, glorious in holiness,
Fearful in praises, doing wonders?
Thou stretchedst out Thine hand, and the earth swallowed them.

(*Chorus as before.*)

IV.

Thou, in Thy mercy, didst lead forth the people which Thou hast redeemed;
Thou didst guide them in Thy strength to Thy holy habitation.
The peoples have heard; they tremble;
Pangs have taken hold on the dwellers in Palestine.
Then were the dukes of Edom amazed;
The mighty men of Moab, trembling, took hold upon them;
All the inhabitants of Canaan are melted away.
Terror and dread shall fall upon them;
By the greatness of Thine arm shall they be still as a stone
Till Thy people pass over, O Jehovah,
Till the people pass over which Thou hast redeemed.
Thou shalt bring them in and plant them in the mountains of Thine inheritance;
The place, O Jehovah, which Thou hast made for Thee to dwell in—
The sanctuary, O Jehovah, which Thy hands have established.
Jehovah shall reign for ever and ever.

(*Chorus as before.*)

CHAPTER XI.

THE STRUGGLE WITH AMALEK.

The Sinaitic Peninsula—Its geography—Its population in the early Egyptian period—Its early history—The population in Moses' time—The Kenites—The Amalekites—Natural hostility of the latter to Israel—Their guerilla warfare—The great fight at Rephidim—Part taken by Moses—Results of the victory, and commemoration of it.

THE Sinaitic Peninsula, on which the Israelites entered after quitting Egypt, is a region of a very marked and peculiar character. Projecting, like a huge wedge, into the Red Sea, with a direction nearly due north and south, and splitting the upper Red Sea into two long tongues or arms, it is itself projected into by "a vast limestone plateau of irregular surface,"[1] which occupies two-thirds of its area, and is sharply divided from the more southern portion of the peninsula by a continuous line of cliff, or escarpment, almost perpendicular on the side which fronts the south-west, steep and difficult, but still with a more gradual fall, on the side which faces south-east. The general elevation of the plateau above the sea level is two thousand feet. It is a region nearly without water. Here and there in the wadys a little may be obtained by scraping holes in the ground, and baling up with the hand a discoloured liquid, which, when allowed to settle, produces a cake of mud about half its own bulk. The ground is hard, and is for the most part covered with a sort of carpet of flints, worn and polished by the fine detritus of sand which is constantly blown upon them, till they resemble pieces of black glass. There are said to be two trees only in the entire country, one at Nakhl and the other in the

[1] "Our Work in Palestine," p. 275.

Wady Fahdî. The tract, however, produces a coarse grass, which is dry and dead during the greater part of the year, but bursts into fresh life at the approach of spring. A certain amount of green vegetation is also to be found in most of the wadys during the whole of the year.

Outside this plateau, called El Tij, to the south, the south-west, and the south-east, is a region of a markedly different character. The plateau, though undulating, is a dull, tame, uninteresting country. There is nothing to notice in it. The journal of a recent traveller in the region contains, for one day, only the following entry: "*Monday.*—Walked six hours; saw two beetles and a crow." The outer region, on the contrary, is one of the strangest and most striking on which the eye of man ever gazed. It is a tangled mass of mountains inextricably confused, separated from the plateau of El Tij by a narrow belt of sand, called towards the west the Debbet-er-Ramleh, and towards the east the Wady El Ain, composed of sandstone, porphyry, and granite rocks, gradually rising in height towards the south-west and south, and culminating in the lofty summit of Um-Shomer, south of Sinai, which attains an elevation of 9,300 feet. Between the mountains, which everywhere almost jostle one another, lie threads of wadys, only rarely expanding into plains of even a mile in width, but watered to some extent by springs, and covered with a thin veil of vegetation. The most striking feature of the mountain sides is their bareness; yet even they are not bare like the Tij. Almost every mountain nourishes some vegetation, and generally a vegetation peculiar to itself. Um-Shomer is named from the fennel (*shomer*), which once undoubtedly characterized it; Ras Sufsâfeh from the willows which still cling to its sides; Serbal from the myrrh (*ser*) which "creeps over its ledges to the very summit." The most probable origin, even of the name Sinai, is to be found in the *saneh*, or acacia, with which it once abounded. One wady is named "the Father of fig-trees" (Wady Abu-Hamad), from its producing that fruit; another "Wady Sidri," from its bushes of wild thorn; another Wady Sayal, from its acacias; another Wady Tayibeh, from the "goodly" water and vegetation which it contains.[1] Compared with the northern, the southern region may be regarded as a "region of springs." "These springs, whose sources are for the most part high up in the mountain

[1] Stanley, "Sinai and Palestine," p. 18.

clefts, occasionally send down into the wadys rills of water which, however scanty—however little deserving even of the name of brooks—yet become immediately the nucleus of whatever vegetation the desert produces. Often their course can be traced, not by visible water, but by a track of moss here, a fringe of rushes there, a solitary palm, a group of acacias—which at once denote that an unseen life is at work. Wherever these springs are found, there, we cannot doubt, must always have been the resort of the wanderers in the desert; and they occur at such frequent intervals that, after leaving Suez, there is at least one such spot in each successive day's journey. In two of the great wadys which lead from the first beginnings of the Sinaitic range to the Gulf of Suez—Ghurundel, and Useit with its continuation of the Wady Tayibeh—such tracts of vegetation are to be found in considerable luxuriance. In a still greater degree is this the case in all the various wadys leading down from the Sinaitic range to the Gulf of Akabah—as the Wady El Ain, the Wady Samghy, and the Wady Kyd—in all of which this union of vegetation with the fantastic scenery of the desolate mountains presents a combination as beautiful as it is extraordinary. In three spots, however, in the desert, and in three only, is this vegetation brought by the concurrence of the general configuration of the country to a still higher pitch. By far the most remarkable collection of springs is that which renders the cluster of Gebel Mousa the chief resort of the Bedouin tribes during the summer heats. Four abundant sources in the mountains immediately above the Convent of St. Catherine, must always have made that region one of the most frequented of the desert. But there are two other of such spots, of considerable importance. One is the palm-grove of El Wady at Tôr—the seaport half-way down the Gulf of Suez, which receives all the waters which flow down from the higher range of Sinai to the sea. The other, and the more important, is the Wady Feirân, high up in the table-land of Sinai itself; but apparently receiving all the waters which, from the springs and torrents of the central cluster of Mount Sinai, flow through the Wady Esh-Sheykh into this basin, where their further exit is forbidden by the rising ground in the Wady Feirân. These two green spots are the oases of Sinai, and, with the nucleus of the springs in Gebel Mousa, form the three chief centres of vegetation in the peninsula." [1]

[1] Stanley, "Sinai and Palestine," pp. 19, 20.

The Sinaitic Peninsula had been inhabited from a very remote date by various wandering tribes, who found a scanty yet sufficient pasture for their flocks in its wadys and oases. The Egyptians knew these tribes anciently as Mentu or Sakti, later on as Shasu. They came into contact with them partly as invaders of their territory, and occupiers of certain districts which yielded copper and turquoises; partly as subject to their incursions. Shasu from time to time ravished the border-lands of Egypt, making raids for the capture of cattle and slaves, and then retreating rapidly into the wilderness. Mentu and Sakti were attacked in their own fastnesses, in the district between the head of the Gulf of Suez and Mount Serbal, and forced into a species of subjection. It was not the object, however, of Egypt at any time to occupy the country, but only to maintain permanent settlements at two posts, not very distant the one from the other, and to have one secure line of communication with them. The posts were at Sarabit-el-Khadim, on the edge of the Debbet-er-Ramleh, in lat. 29° 2′, long. 33° 25′, nearly; and in the Wady Magharah, further to the south, in lat. 28° 53′, long. 33° 22′, nearly. Mines of copper and turquoise were worked in both localities, and in each place an Egyptian garrison was maintained for the protection of the miners. A strong fortress was built of large blocks of stone to accommodate the troops, with a deep well inside to secure them an unfailing supply of water; and in the vicinity were erected temples to some of the principal Egyptian divinities, that the expatriated soldiers might have the enjoyment of their accustomed worship. The district was first occupied in the time of the fourth dynasty, or before the date of Abraham; and the founder of that dynasty, together with his successor, the founder of the Great Pyramid, cut in the soft sandstone of the Wady Magharah effigies of themselves, which remain to the present day, and are among the very earliest of the historical monuments that have come down to our time. It is not altogether certain that the possession of the copper mines by the Egyptians was continuous from the time of their first occupation to that of the nineteenth dynasty; but, on the whole, probability is in favour of their having held the mines with little or no interruption from the conquest of Sneferu in the fourth dynasty, to the reign of Ramesses III. in the twentieth. At any rate, such a monarch as Ramesses II. is sure to have held them, and we cannot

doubt that they passed from him to his son. Thus, at the time of the Exodus, there was an Egyptian element in the population of the Sinaitic peninsula which, however, was confined within narrow limits, and did not aspire to any general authority even over the western part of the country.

The peninsula was mainly peopled at the time by two other quite different races. These were the Kenites and the Amalekites. The Kenites, a branch of the people of Midian (who were widely spread over South-western Asia, occupying both sides of the Gulf of Akabah, and reaching thence to the Dead Sea and the country east of the Jordan), were chiefly settled in the eastern portion of the peninsula, on the coast of the sea, and in the many fertile wadys which pierce the coast range along its entire length. They claimed descent from Abraham, and were extremely well disposed towards the Hebrews, whom they regarded as a kindred race, and with whom they had recently become still more closely connected by the marriage of Moses with Zipporah, daughter of Reuel (or Raguel), one of their chiefs. A portion of the great mountain cluster in which the peninsula terminates towards the south was included in the country which they considered to be theirs; but the extreme limit of this tract to the westward was probably the region immediately around Sinai. The Kenites were a pastoral and a peaceful people, who make but little show in history. They could bring to the help of an ally no important military aid, but their countenance and support were no doubt of important service to the Israelites, when they had made their way into the Kenite country.

The Amalekites are derived by some from Amalek, one of the grandsons of Esau (Gen. xxxvi. 12). But there is nothing in Scripture to support this view; and the fact that, though enemies of Israel, they are never taxed with unnatural conduct, as the Edomites are, is strongly against the connection. Arabian tradition makes them a pure Arab race from the shores of the Persian Gulf, and represents them as driven thence into the desert, at a very early date, by the advancing Assyrian (*i.e.*, Babylonian) power. This account of their antiquity harmonizes with the mention of them as a nation in the earlier life of Abraham (Gen. xiv. 7), before Amalek can have been born, and with the early date at which they achieved greatness. "Amalek was the first of the nations" (Numb. xxiv. 20) in the view of Balak

the son of Beor. It had at one time held Palestine, and left its name in the "mount of the Amalekites," near Pirathon, in the land of Ephraim (Judg. xii. 15). It had then entrenched itself strongly in the Negeb, or south country, which it held till the times of Saul and David. From the Negeb it extended its sway over the adjoining tract of the Tij, and from the Tij it penetrated into the Sinaitic mountain cluster, and became the dominant power in the western portion of the region. Widely spread over the Negeb are "the primeval stone remains of a prehistoric race, and the *Hazeroth*, or fenced enclosures of a pastoral people,"[1] presumably the Amalekites, who dwelt here at the time of the Exodus (Numb. xiii. 29). All over the desert of El Tij are similar constructions—circular camps, enclosed by walls now about three feet high, composed of large boulders packed together with much care. Within the outer ring are a number of smaller circles communicating one with another. The remains closely resemble the camping-grounds of the modern Morocco Arabs; and here, again, we have probably the Hazeroth of the Amalekite people. Spread over the Negeb and the Tij, they naturally pressed on into the more desirable mountain region of the extreme south, and made themselves masters of the entire tract between the Red Sea and Sinai, most valuable to them on account of its water supply, its large patches of perennial verdure, its palm groves (Exod. xv. 27), and its other leafy regions. There is reason to believe that anciently the entire peninsula was much better watered than at present, and that especially this was the case with the mountain region of the south. "The barrenness of the peninsula," say the officers engaged in the recent survey,[2] "is due to neglect. In former times it was more richly wooded; the wadys were protected by walls stretching across, which served as dams to resist the force of the rushing waters; the mountains were terraced, and clothed with gardens and groves. The fertility lasted till (comparatively) modern times. The monks—there was formerly a large Christian community in the peninsula—carried on the old traditions of cultivation (traditions perhaps as old as the Amalekites) and terraced, protected, and planted. Then came the bad times of Mohammedan rule, which let in the Bedouin to waste and destroy. Then the protecting walls across the wadys were broken down; the green terraces along

[1] "Our Work in Palestine," p. 276. [2] Ibid. p. 270.

their sides were destroyed; the trees were cut down, or carried away by the winter torrents." Yet even now, it is noted, "despite of neglect and desolation, there is still fertility to be found in the peninsula of Sinai. There are no rivers, yet many a pleasant little rivulet, fringed with verdure, may be met with here and there, especially in the romantic glens of the granite district. At Wadys Nasb and Ghurundel are perennial, though not continuous streams, and large tracts of vegetation."[1]

It is evident that to the Amalekites the entrance of the Israelites into the peninsula, in the guise of settlers, with their wives and children and their large flocks and herds, must have been exceedingly distasteful. Especially must it have angered them, that the intruding tribe, instead of taking the direct route through the Tij to Canaan, whither they professed to be bound, deviated wholly from that line of march, and turning southwards, showed the intention of, so far as possible, avoiding the bare plateau of the Tij, and pasturing its flocks and herds in the "romantic glens" of the south, which formed their own summer camping ground. If the month was April, as is probable, they would have been absent from their mountain pastures, feeding their flocks on the rich herbage, which even the very desert produces under the influence of the spring rains, when they are abundant. A portion would have been scattered over the Tij, while some may have been feeding their sheep and goats on the flat coast tracts of El Kaa and El Murkhah. The Israelites thus did not fall in with them when they first entered the mountain country, but were able themselves to enjoy unmolested the rich pasturages and palm groves of the more western region, about Wadys Ghurundel, Useit, and Tayibeh, one of the most charming regions of the peninsula. But their presence was ere long reported to the Amalekite chiefs, and orders went forth from head-quarters, that their march should be watched, and that they should be, as much as possible, harassed and annoyed, whithersoever they betook themselves. The Israelites probably greatly outnumbered the Amalekites; but they were unaccustomed to warfare, and poorly armed, a small proportion of them only having weapons, which they had either brought with them out of Egypt, or obtained from the bodies of those drowned Egyptians, who were cast up on the eastern coast of the Gulf of Suez

[1] "Our Work in Palestine," p. 271.

after Pharaoh's host had been drowned in the Red Sea (Exod. xiv. 30). The Amalekites were, on the contrary, excessively warlike, well armed, and fairly disciplined, having been long accustomed to hold their own against the surrounding nations, with whom they had frequent collisions. Thus the two enemies were not, upon the whole, ill-matched.

The Amalekites commenced the contest by hanging upon the rear of the Israelite host, cutting off its baggage and its stragglers, and inflicting as much damage as was possible by a kind of guerilla warfare (Deut. xxv. 18). Their active bands followed up the loose column of Israelites as it crossed the hills or wound through the wadys of the mountain region, smiting the hindmost, threatening, obstructing, plundering. Meanwhile, the chiefs of the nation were busy collecting its warriors from the more distant portions of its territory, from Petra and Gebalêné,[1] from Kadesh or En-Mishpat, from the wadys of the Tij, and the highlands of the Negeb. A strong force was gathered together, and took up a position at a place called Rephidim, situate probably in the Wady Feiran, where it resolved to fight in defence of its pastures. Moses had no choice but to accept the challenge. Distrusting his own capacity for command at the age of eighty-one, he selected from the younger men a warrior of the tribe of Ephraim, by name Oshea or Joshua, and committing to him the task of conducting the combat, reserved for himself the duty of watching its progress and aiding his countrymen by his prayers. Never to be forgotten is that sublime figure of the aged patriarch, lifting his hands to heaven in the Oriental attitude of prayer, seeking, as it were, to draw down blessings from above. The battle rages in the valley beneath; now one side, now the other, has the better of it. Moses observes that, while he can hold his hands aloft, success attends his own countrymen, but when through faintness and weariness he lets them drop, Amalek recovers itself and begins to have the upper hand. He has with him his two most natural supports, Aaron, his elder brother, and Hur, who, according to Josephus,[2] was the husband of Miriam, his sister, and these chieftains come to his relief. Setting him on a stone seat, and standing one at either side of him, they prop up the weary arms, and hold them steady in an erect position through the long hours

[1] So Josephus, "Ant. Jud." ii. 2, § 1. [2] Ibid. ii. 2, § 4

of that eventful day, until the sun goes down (Exod. xvii 12). By that time Amalek was completely discomfited. Their best warriors were slain with the sword; and the slaughter would have been general, had not night put a stop to the combat. The remnant fled, leaving their camp standing, which was at once taken and plundered.

The Jewish historian of later times descants upon both the material and the moral effects of the victory. The material effects were twofold. In the first place, there was a great accession of wealth to the Israelites, Amalek having taken the field, as Orientals so continually do, laden with gold and silver ornaments, and their camp being found full of rich stuffs, of vessels for the table both in bronze and in the precious metals, and of other valuable equipment. Secondly, the Israelites became possessed, by their victory, of a large stock both of arms and armour, in which they had previously been very deficient. The armour was stripped from the bodies of the dead, the shields and coats of mail, thrown away as impediments to their flight by those who had escaped from the field, were collected; and from these two sources a large number of the Israelites were equipped so as to leave little to be desired. "The Israelite heavy-armed infantry," says Josephus, "was now considerable." A solidity and firmness was given to the migration which it had not possessed previously; its confidence in itself was much increased; and it had found a military commander, now in the full vigour of manhood, in whom under any circumstances of danger it could repose perfect confidence.

But the most important consequence of the victory, was the impression which it made upon the Amalekites themselves, and upon the other neighbouring nations. Until the valour of Israel was tested, and the metal whereof it was composed put to the proof, none could say whether a new nation had appeared in the world, which would have to be reckoned with by the previously existing powers, or whether a mere rabble of worthless slaves had escaped from the yoke of their masters, to melt away, perish, and disappear from the earth in the course of one or two decades. The deliverance at the Red Sea had in no way tested the stuff whereof Israel was made. It was a pure and absolute deliverance *by miracle*, and was effected without the two hosts of Israel and Egypt coming into collision. Now, a collision had taken place between Israel and one of the well-known

world powers—a power which by its previous history had vindicated to itself a very important place among the nations (Numb. xxiv. 20). A fair trial of strength had taken place; there had been no miraculous interference, unless we include in miracle the unseen might of effectual fervent prayer, which is, in fact, a normal element in the constitution of things. After a long struggle, which had lasted during a whole day, Israel had emerged the victor; Amalek was completely defeated; after suffering great losses the Amalekite host had fled away in disorder from the field of battle. The lesson was primarily taken to heart by Amalek itself, which thenceforth made way for Israel, withdrew from all contact, retreated and kept aloof, until the time came when Israel took the aggressive, sought out Amalek in the Negeb, and attempted the conquest of that old seat of Amalekite power (Numb. xiv. 40–44), without Divine authority, when they in their turn experienced a defeat (ver. 45). Meanwhile, a truce prevailed between the two peoples; Israel had made itself respected; and Amalek, instead of provoking, shrank from further hostile encounter.

There was a further effect produced upon other neighbouring nations. The prowess of Israel induced the Kenites to draw closer the bonds which united them with the Hebrews. The other minor tribes of the peninsula, and the peoples upon its borders—Edomites, Moabites, Amorites, Philistines—were more or less impressed by what had occurred, and followed the Amalekites in a policy of abstention. Israel appeared to all of them too formidable to be meddled with, and was allowed to pursue its course unmolested for a considerable time. As Josephus says—"The victory of Rephidim was not merely of immediate, but of much prospective advantage to the people of Israel; for they not subjected the bodies, but the spirits of their adversaries, and their defeat of the Amalekites rendered them an object of fear to all the nations round about." [1]

Moses, however, viewed the victory less as the result of Israelitish prowess than as God's answer to his own prolonged and earnest prayer. Josephus says that he greatly praised the conduct of Joshua, and bestowed various honours and rewards on those who had distinguished themselves in the fight; but the sacred narrative, which we owe probably to his own pen, omits all reference

[1] "Ant. Jud." iii. 2, § 4.

to the human instruments of the success, and tells of his offering no acknowledgments on the occasion to any but God. His memorial of the victory was an altar, built probably on the spot where he had stood and sate, whereto he gave the name of "Jehovah-nissi," or "The Lord is my banner"—under Him I go out to battle, through Him alone do I subdue my enemies.

CHAPTER XII.

MOSES AT SINAI.

Sinai; its geographical features—God's manifestation of Himself to Israel there, directly, through the elders, and through Moses—Abiding proof of the last-named manifestation in the light that shone from Moses' countenance—Purpose of the manifestations—The legislation of Sinai, not *from*, but only *through* Moses—Individuality of Moses strongly marked in his conduct at Sinai—His reverence—His care for the people—His indignation at their apostasy—His severe punishment of it—His subsequent intercession for his people—His stupendous act of self-devotion and its consequences, to the people, to himself—Exaltation of the character of Moses after Sinai.

FROM Rephidim the people of Israel, guided by the pillar of the cloud, proceeded to Sinai. "Onwards and upwards after their long halt, exulting in their first victory, they advanced deeper and deeper into the mountain ranges, they knew not whither. . . . Onwards they went, and the mountains closed around them, upwards through winding valley, and under high cliff, and over rugged pass, and through gigantic forms, on which the marks of creation even now seem fresh and powerful; and at last, through all the different valleys, the whole body of the people were assembled. On their right hand and on their left rose long successions of lofty rocks, forming a vast avenue, like the approaches which they had seen leading to the Egyptian temples between colossal figures of men and of gods. At the end of this broad avenue, rising immediately out of the level plain, towered the massive cliffs of Sinai, like the huge altar of some natural temple; encircled by peaks of every shape and height, the natural pyramids of the desert. In this sanctuary, and

secluded from all earthly things, raised high above even the wilderness itself—arrived, as it must have seemed to them, at the very end of the world—they waited for the Revelation of God."[1]

The general consensus of recent travellers, now that the whole region has been thoroughly explored, fixes the place of gathering in the plain now called Er-Rahah, at the foot of the precipitous granite rock known as the Ras Sufsâfeh. The plain is two miles long and half a mile wide, nearly flat, and dotted over with tamarisk bushes. The mountains which enclose it have for the most part sloping sides, and form a sort of natural amphitheatre. "That such a plain should exist at all in such a place," says Dean Stanley, "is so remarkable a coincidence with the sacred narrative, as to furnish a strong internal argument, not merely of its indentity with the scene, but of the scene itself having been described by an eye-witness."[2] All the surroundings are such as exactly suit the narrative. "The awful and lengthened approach, as to some natural sanctuary, would have been the fittest preparation for the coming scene. The low line of alluvial mounds at the foot of the cliff exactly answers to the 'bounds' which were to keep the people off from 'touching the mount.' The plain itself is not broken and uneven and narrowly shut in, like almost all others in the range, but presents a long retiring sweep, against which the people could 'remove and stand afar off.' The cliff, rising like a huge altar, in front of the whole congregation, and visible against the sky in lonely grandeur from end to end of the whole plain, is the very image of the 'mount that might be touched,' and from which the voice of God might be heard far and wide over the plain below, widened at that point to its utmost extent by the confluence of all the contiguous valleys. Here, beyond all other parts of the peninsula, is the *adytum*, withdrawn as if in the 'end of the world' from all the stir and confusion of earthly things."[3] As an eminent engineer has observed—"No spot in the world can be pointed out which combines in a more remarkable manner the conditions of a commanding height and of a plain in every part of which the sights and sounds described in Exodus would reach an assembled multitude of more than two million souls."[4]

[1] Stanley, "Lectures on the Jewish Church," vol. i. pp. 149, 150.
[2] "Sinai and Palestine," p. 42. [3] Ibid. p. 43.
[4] Sir Henry James, quoted by Canon Cook in the "Speaker's Commentary," vol. i. p. 442.

The heart of the desert was reached. The whole multitude, hitherto scattered in the many wadys and over the broad mountain sides, were collected to a single encampment, where they might be seen and impressed at once. The Eternal was to be revealed to them. It was to be impressed upon them indelibly, that they were God's people, placed in a relation to Him that was not occupied by any other nation upon the earth, put under His direct rule, to be governed by laws which were His commandments and decrees. But how was such a revelation to be made? All mankind was, at this period of the world's history, so prone to idolatry, and Israel was so deeply infected by the contagion of Egyptian superstition (Josh. xxiv. 14), that if God had appeared to them in any form, they would infallibly have seized upon that form, have reproduced it, imitated it, and made it an object of idolatrous veneration. It was necessary that they should have an absolute conviction of the presence, power, might, majesty of God, and yet that they should not see Him, should not have any form with which to connect Him. The manifestation of God was therefore made to them after this fashion. God "came down upon Sinai" (Exod. xix. 20). On the morning of the third day after their arrival, when their expectations had been wrought up to the highest pitch by orders from Moses to sanctify and purify themselves (vers. 10–15), they beheld, and lo! suddenly, "there were thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mount, and the voice of a trumpet exceeding loud; so that all the people that was in the camp trembled" (ver. 16); and "Mount Sinai was altogether on a smoke, because the Lord descended on it in fire; and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace; and the whole mount quaked greatly" (ver. 18). Or, as the scene is elsewhere described by Moses—"Ye came near and stood under the mountain, and the mountain *burned with fire unto the midst of heaven*, with darkness, clouds, and *thick darkness*. And the Lord *spoke unto you out of the midst of the fire*: ye heard the voice of the words, but saw no similitude; only ye heard a voice" (Deut. iv. 11, 12). It was not a mere "storm of thunder and lightning, whereof Moses took advantage to persuade the people that they had heard God's voice"—it was not "an earthquake with volcanic eruptions"—it was not even these two combined—it was a veritable theophany, in which, amid the phenomena of storm and tempest, and fire and smoke, and

thick darkness, and heavings of the ground as by an earthquake shock, first the loud blast seemingly of a trumpet sounded long, commanding attention, and then a clear, penetrating voice, like that of a man, made itself heard in distinctly articulated words, audible to the whole multitude, proceeding out of the midst of the fire, and recognized by the multitude as superhuman, as "the voice of God" (Deut. iv. 33).

This direct manifestation of God to His people generally was supplemented by a further manifestion, somewhat later, in which He showed Himself to them more distinctly, but through their representatives. Moses was instructed to take with him into the Mount his brother Aaron, Aaron's two sons, Nadab and Abihu, together with the seventy elders of Israel, in order that they might draw more near to God than was permitted to the mass of the people, and hold closer communion with Him (Exod. xxiv. 1). A sacrificial feast was celebrated, at which these persons were present, and in the course of it a fresh revelation was made. "They saw the God of Israel, and there was under his feet as it were a work of clear sapphire, and as it were the body of heaven in his clearness" (ver. 10). These words can scarcely mean less, than that the elders saw with their bodily eyes some appearance of the Divine Being who had summoned them to His presence for the purpose. As Isaiah "saw the Lord sitting upon His throne" (Isa. vi. 1), and Ezekiel saw "the likeness of a throne, and upon the likeness of the throne the likeness as the appearance of a man above, upon it" (Ezek. i. 26), so now the elders "saw the God of Israel." What exactly the form was which the elders saw, we are not told; but as it had "feet," it was probably a human form. It may have been hazy, indefinite, "too dazzling bright for mortal eye" to rest upon; but it was a true vision of God, and as Keil says, "a foretaste of the blessedness of the sight of God in eternity."

And Moses, the leader of the nation, in whom the whole people may be regarded as summed up, centred, and embodied, was vouchsafed long, direct, continuous, and most unmistakable communication with the Almighty, communication which did not rest, like that of Mahomet and other fanatics, on his own unsupported *ipse dixit*, but which was confirmed and attested, so far as was possible, by the entire people. "*All the people saw* the thunderings, and the lightnings, and the noise of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking; and when they saw it,

they removed and stood afar off; and said unto Moses, 'Speak thou with us, and we will hear; but let not God speak with us, lest we die. . . . And the people stood afar off, and Moses drew near unto the thick darkness, where God was" (Exod. xx. 18, 21). "Moses went up into the mount, and a cloud covered the mount; and the glory of the Lord abode upon Mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it six days; and the seventh day He called unto Moses out of the cloud. And *the sight of the glory of the Lord was like devouring fire on the top of the mount in the eyes of the children of Israel.* And Moses went into the midst of the cloud, and gat him up into the mount; and Moses was in the mount forty days and forty nights" (Exod. xxiv. 15–18).

Moreover, the reality of Moses' admission to the presence of God was testified, physically, in another most extraordinary way. When he came down from Mount Sinai the second time, "the skin of his face shone. . . . And when Aaron and all the children of Israel saw Moses, behold, the skin of his face shone, and they were afraid to come nigh him" (Exod. xxxiv. 29, 30). As St. Paul expresses the fact—"The children of Israel could not stedfastly behold the face of Moses for the glory of his countenance" (2 Cor. iii. 7). A light, like that which rested on the face of our Lord at the transfiguration, beamed from the countenance of the great leader thenceforth, a light so plainly supernatural, that it terrified ordinary men, and induced Moses thenceforth under ordinary circumstances to veil his face from the eyes of the people. None could doubt that this light was the reflection of that radiance which had streamed on him day and night during his long conference with the Supreme Being, during which he "with open face beholding the glory of the Lord, had been changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the spirit of the Lord" (ver. 18).

These manifestations of Himself by God to Israel at Mount Sinai seem to have had a double purpose. Primarily, they were to impress on the people the reality of the Divine existence, the power and awful majesty of God, and His nearness and close relation to themselves. Secondarily, they were to give the highest possible sanction to that Law, or series of Laws, which Moses was commissioned to impose on them as of absolute obligation. A stubborn and "stiff-necked" race, like the

Hebrews, would never have accepted any merely human legislation, or regarded themselves as bound by it a moment longer than suited their own convenience. They had to be convinced that all the laws, all the statutes, all the ordinances, which Moses gave them, were the laws, statutes, and ordinances of God Himself. Hence, and hence alone, the enduringness of the Law, which was regarded as valid in its entirety for more than fourteen hundred years, and is still held to be obligatory in many, if not in most, particulars. Never was there a case in which miracle was more justified by its results. Assuming the object to be the creation of a "peculiar people," marked out from all the world by a special set of unchanging laws, ordinances, and customs, then the means adopted must be pronounced at once absolutely effectual, and probably the only means by which the result aimed at could have been effected.

It does not belong to the province of a biographer of Moses to enter into any account of the legislation which goes by his name. Had Moses been the fount and origin of the legislation, had he out of the resources of his own mind framed that wonderful system which held the Hebrew nation together for a millennium and a half, his legislation would have been the great act of his life, the measure of his intellectual capacity, the crucial test of his strength and weakness, the ultimate ground on which would have rested all estimates of his character. But the plain, direct, and reiterated statement of Scripture is, that in his legislative capacity he initiated nothing, he was "a mere passive instrument of the Divine Will." No doubt, in the poetical language of the Old Testament (Numb. xxi. 18; Deut. xxxiii. 21), and in the popular language of both Jews and Christians, he is known as the Law-giver";[1] but this does not mean that he was a "Law-giver" as Solon, or Lycurgus, or Numa, or Demonax, or Zaleucus, or Justinian, or even Charlemagne; Moses "gave the Law" (John vii. 19); but he gave it exactly as it had been delivered to him by the Almighty. As the Ten Commandments were spoken by God "out of the midst of the fire, of the cloud, and of the thick darkness, with a great voice" (Deut. v. 22), and as the words of the original "Book of the Covenant" were delivered to Moses by God in the form in which he published them to the people (Exod. xx. 22), so every later ordinance is declared to have

[1] Stanley in Smith's "Dictionary of the Bible," vol. ii. p. 428.

been from God's mouth, spoken by God to Moses, and then communicated without change to the people. The key to the whole Mosaic Law is found in the ever-recurring formula—"Ye shall observe all these statutes—*I am the Lord.*" It was not Moses who determined what old customs, laws, ceremonies, long familiar to the Hebrew nation, should be continued, what abolished, what modified or restrained; it was not Moses who made the law of divorce, or the law of slavery, or the laws relating to paternal authority, or to the avenger of blood; it was not by Moses that provisions were taken, if any provisions were taken, from the Egyptian code, or from the customs of the Arabs; from first to last the legislation was God's work; Moses did nothing else but promulgate it. We must not ascribe to Moses a tenderness and humanity in advance of his age on account of the humane provisions of the laws with respect to the poor, to slaves, to kidnapping, to usury, to pledges; or blame him for what seems to us harsh and inequitable in the laws respecting divorce, retaliation, disrespect to parents, and the like. God, not Moses, was the author of each proviso, the real legislator, the real law-giver, the true compiler of the code. Moses was but His mouth-piece, an intermediary to communicate God's decrees to His people.

The individuality of Moses comes out, during the Sinaitic sojourn, not in his laws, but in the history which we have of his acts. First, we see his great reverence for God, and his tender care of his people, in the pains taken to impress on them the sanctity of the Mount while God's presence was upon it; the danger of approaching too near it, or of presenting themselves before God while there was attaching to them any sort of defilement (Exod. xix. 14, 15, 25). Then we note the absence from his character of all jealousy or self-seeking in his readiness to share the honour of approaching near to God, first with Aaron, Nadab, Abihu, and the seventy elders (chap. xxiv. 9–11), and then with Joshua, "his minister" (ver. 13). Next, we see his temper, judgment, conduct, feelings, undergoing suddenly the severest and most tremendous test, when, on his descending from Sinai, anxious concerning his people, with the Two Tables of the Law in his hand, there breaks upon him suddenly—first the sound, and then the sight, of that miserable lapse of Israel into Egyptian grossness and idolatry, which must always remain one of the most shameful passages in the history of mankind,

one of the most extraordinary apostacies that has ever been witnessed in heaven or earth. While he has been absorbed in the closest communion with the One pure, spiritual God, drinking in life and light and spirituality from that Holy, Awful Source, his people have gone back, in thought and word and act, to the materialism, the idol-worship, and the lewd orgies, of which they have had experience in Egypt. Aaron, whom he had left to restrain their waywardness and unruliness, instead of restraining them, has aided and abetted them in their sin; and he sees the whole camp engaged in a festival on the Egyptian model, with their clothes in part laid aside (ver. 25), singing lewd songs, and dancing licentious dances. Under the strange and fearful circumstances that hot temper breaks out a second time, which showed itself in Egypt, when he slew the smiter of his countryman, and Moses dashes to the ground and breaks to pieces the Two Tables, written with the finger of God, which were the most precious monuments that the world contained at the time. The action was not deliberate—it was momentary, instinctive; it sprang from a fierce and fiery indignation at the unworthy conduct of his nation, who did not deserve the precious gift which he was bringing them, and whom he therefore deprived of the gift. It is remarkable that Moses is never blamed for his act, and speaks of it many years afterwards without disapproval (Deut. ix. 17). Fiery indignation at sin, springing as it does from a jealousy for God's honour, is an emotion which is not too common among men, and one which God's Word does not discourage.

The next act of Moses seems to have been to order the destruction of the idol (ver. 20), which was necessarily a work of time, occupying probably several days. He then proceeded to stop the orgy, which, in spite of his presence, continued. The sight aroused in Moses the same burning indignation which had led him to break the Tables. He must stop the orgy at any cost. Standing therefore in the gate of the camp, he raised aloud the cry, "Who is on the Lord's side? Let him come unto me,' (literally, "Who for Jehovah? To me"); and when the Levites who were within hearing rallied to his side, he made them the executioners of a terrible punishment. "Put every man his sword by his side," he said, "and go in and out from gate to gate throughout the camp, and slay every man his brother, and every man his companion, and every man his neighbour. And

the children of Levi did according to the word of Moses; and there fell of the people that day about three thousand men" (vers. 27, 28). Moses, we see, was no weak sentimentalist; he did not shrink from measures of extreme severity, when severity was requisite. It was an awful thing to have to put to a sudden and violent death three thousand men—his own countrymen—utterly unprepared, in the very high tide of gaiety and excitement, and in the commission of deadly sin, worshipping an idol with lascivious songs and dances; but may it not have been a wise act, and an act of mercy? God had threatened to let loose his anger upon the guilty people (ver. 10), an anger that would have entirely "consumed" them, perhaps in a moment of time. Moses turns his wrath aside by punishing with death three thousand of the guiltiest. He sacrifices 3,000 lives; he saves nigh upon 600,000. He turns away the wrath of God, who accepts the punishment inflicted as sufficient, at any rate for the time being, and reserves the action of His retributive justice for some distant day of visitation (vers. 34, 35).

When the execution is over, when the swords are wiped and returned to their scabbards, when the slain are buried and the traces of their slaughter removed, Moses earnestly wrestles with God in prayer on behalf of his people. He had prevented their immediate destruction, but he requires more—he would fain have them fully and freely forgiven. It is in this crisis that he performs the sublime act of self-renunciation and self-devotion, which must always remain one of the most glorious acts of which humanity has shown itself capable, and must be held as entitling him to a high place—may we not say the highest place?—among the heroic characters of the world. He had already, before he descended from Sinai, declined the proffered honour of being put in the place of Abraham, made the absolute progenitor of all God's people; he had put the offer from him without a moment's hesitation, and had induced the Almighty to change his purpose (vers. 9–14); he now went further—he offered himself for his people! "This people," he said, "have sinned a great sin—they have made them a god of gold. Yet now, if Thou wilt [freely] forgive their sin, well and good; but if not, *blot me, I pray Thee, out of Thy book which Thou hast written*" (vers. 31, 32). "The book of the living" is that book (as Keil notes) which "contains the list of the righteous, and ensures to those whose names are written therein life before God, first in

the earthly kingdom of God, and then eternal life also." Thus Moses declared his willingness—nay, his wish—that God would visit on him the guilt of his people, both in this world and the next; so that He would thereupon forgive them. "Infinite things were to be hoped for from God's love; infinite things were to be dreaded from His anger. . . Moses was willing to die; to be cut off from covenant hope and privilege; to undergo whatever awful doom subjection to God's wrath might imply; if only thereby his people could be saved. It was a stupendous proposal to make; an extraordinary act of self-devotion; a wondrous exponent of his patriotic love for his people; a not less wondrous recognition of what was due to the justice of God ere sin could be forgiven—a glimpse even, struck out from the passionate yearning of his own heart, of the actual method of redemption. A type of Christ has been seen in the youthful Isaac ascending the hill to be offered on the altar by Abraham his father. A much nearer type is Moses, 'setting his face' (Luke ix. 51) to ascend the Mount, and bearing in his heart this sublime purpose of devoting himself for the sins of the nation." [1]

Though the offer of Moses could not be accepted, since "no [mere] man can deliver his brother, nor make agreement unto God for him" (Ps. xlix. 7), yet great benefits flowed from it, both to himself and to the people. The people were not cast off; they were not deserted; the Angel of God's Presence still continued with them, and went with them throughout their wanderings, and sustained them along the weary way, and ultimately "gave them rest" (Exod. xxxiii. 14) in the Promised Land. Moses' spiritual life entered into a new stage. He was drawn nearer to God by the effort which he had made; and God in consequence drew nearer to him. The self-devotion of Moses is followed closely by the establishment of the first "Tabernacle of the Congregation" (ver. 7) beyond the camp, and in this Tabernacle, which only he and his personal attendant, Joshua, are privileged to enter, Moses is admitted to continual communion with God of a closer kind than even that which he had enjoyed upon Mount Sinai. When he needs to consult God, or to commune with Him, he has only to "go out unto the tabernacle;" as he enters it, the pillar of the cloud quits its previous position, whatever that might be, and "descends and

[1] The Rev. J. Orr, in "The Pulpit Commentary," Exodus, pp. 693, 694.

stands at the door of the Tabernacle," and remains there while he is within it. Within, God "talks with Moses" (ver. 9), "speaks to him face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend" (ver. 11). It is impossible to conceive communion more close, more purifying, more elevating than this, which Moses was permitted to enjoy for nearly forty years, from the first erection of the Tabernacle to the day of his death.

But this was not all. While his continual growth in grace, and in the wisdom and knowledge of God was thus provided for, a further momentary privilege was granted him transcending any ever previously imparted to any of the sons of men. Hungering more and more after the sight of God, as he was drawn more and more close to him, Moses desired and prayed to see the unveiled glory of Jehovah (ver. 18). The request could not be granted in its fulness. "Thou canst not see my face," he was told, "for there shall no man see my face and live" (ver. 20). But all was granted that was possible. He was bidden to ascend Sinai alone; the flocks and the herds were to be removed to a distance from the mount (Exod. xxxiv. 3); he was to take his place on a well-known or prominent rock (Exod. xxxiii. 21); and there, covered by the Divine hand and sheltered in a clift of the rock, he was to wait while the Divine Glory passed him by. The scene evidently transcends human language and human thought. It has to be described by tropes and figures. God, having first proclaimed His name, as "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, and yet visiting iniquity," and in no case "clearing the guilty" (Exod. xxxiv. 6–7), passed Moses by in such sort that "His face" was not seen, but only "His back parts" (Exod. xxxiii. 23)—some reflex image of His glory, that is to say, some radiance left by it, but the utmost that man could see and yet live, more (probably) than either Isaiah (vi. 1) or Ezekiel (i. 26) saw—some near approach to that "beatific vision" which shall constitute to the saints in bliss the satisfaction of all their cravings, the perfect contentation of all their desires.

Moses after Sinai is not as Moses before Sinai—he is spiritualized—he lives in a different world. Not that he is as yet sinless. Human imperfection clings to him, as it must to all who have not passed within the veil. But he is henceforth the Prophet rather than the Ruler, "very meek" and wanting

in self-assertion (Numb. xii. 3), free from all jealousy (Numb. xi. 29), mild, forgiving (Numb. xii. 13), chiefly employed in communicating God's will to the people. He must have passed much of his time in the Tabernacle of the Congregation, in close communion with the Almighty, receiving from Him that complex legislation, which, according to the Rabbis, contained 248 positive and 365 negative precepts, and which occupies almost the whole of two Books of Scripture—Leviticus and Numbers. A distance was placed between him and his countrymen by the strange glory which shone from his face, and the veil which he ordinarily wore to shroud it from them —he became to them something mysterious, something awful—they watched his movements with a timid and subdued curiosity (Exod. xxiii. 8–10)—he must have seemed to them more than mortal, half human, half Divine. And, correspondent to this external manifestation of increased likeness to God, was an inward purification and elevation of character, a passage "from strength to strength," "from glory to glory," which, though Moses himself was perhaps unconscious of it, as he was at first of the light that streamed from his face (Exod. xxxiv. 29), is yet very apparent to the careful student of the later Books of the Pentateuch.

CHAPTER XIII.

HEBREW ART IN MOSES' TIME.

Hebrew Art more advanced than might have appeared probable—Possible derivation of some of it from Chaldea—Artificers needed by nomadic tribes—Advances which Hebrew Art would naturally have made in Egypt—Egyptian and Hebrew Metallurgy—Carpentry—Textile industry—Embroidery—Tanning and dyeing of leather—Gem-cutting and gem-engraving—Confection of spices and unguents—General Egyptian character of Hebrew Art in Moses' time—Exceptions—Hebrew eclecticism.

AMONG the instructions given to Moses on Mount Sinai was a long series (Exod. xxv.–xxx.), which had reference to the externals of worship, and involved the exercise of various arts and industries, belonging to a somewhat advanced civilization —a civilization which has seemed to many out of harmony with the circumstances of the people, just escaped from slavery, and from employment in agriculture, building, brick-making, and other servile labours. It is therefore important to consider what opportunities the Hebrews had had of attaining proficiency in the arts and industries in question, and what it may reasonably be concluded that their civilization in these respects was at the time of the exodus. The subject is also one proper to be discussed in any account of the "Life and Times of Moses," which could not be complete without some consideration of it.

First, then, it is to be remembered, that the Chaldeans, or Babylonians, at the time when the family of Abraham left them and proceeded northwards, were in possession of many valuable arts, and of a civilization that had advanced considerably beyond the first rudiments. The Babylonians of a time long anterior

to Abraham burnt excellent brick (Gen. xi. 3), built cities (Gen. x. 10), and conceived the design of erecting a tower whose top should reach to heaven (Gen. xi. 4). They were well acquainted with metallurgy, and by the mixture of copper with tin produced a bronze of a quality scarcely surpassed by the best bronze of the Greeks. They were familiar with the art of weaving, and manufactured fabrics of a good quality, which by the time of Moses, and probably much earlier, had attained a wide reputation, and formed an article of exportation to foreign countries (Josh. vii. 21). They had paid great attention to the arts of gem-cutting and gem-engraving, which they carried to a considerable degree of perfection, having advanced so far as to deal freely with several of the materials known to jewellers as "hard stones," and covering these with inscriptions and with representations of men and animals, which indicate a complete mastery of the graver.[1]

There can be no reason why the household of Terah, when he quitted Ur of the Chaldees, should not have contained artificers well instructed in the various arts practised in Babylonia at the time. A nomadic tribe, which avoids cities and dwells in the wilderness, requires to have in it persons capable of producing all the commodities which it regards as essential to its life. The household of Abraham contained 318 males; that of Terah was probably not smaller. He would be careful to include within it, before quitting Ur, persons skilled in weaving the goat's-hair cloths required as coverings for the tents, weavers of woollen cloth for the outer and of linen for the inner garments, artificers in metal to furnish the tribe with arms, ornaments, and implements, potters to make them their ordinary earthenware utensils, and even perhaps artists skilled in the delicate embroidery of garments, together with gem-cutters and gem-engravers, who might provide the chiefs and the upper class of their retainers with seals, cylinders, and rings. The descendants of Abraham, long before they entered Egypt, possessed signets, bracelets (Gen. xxxviii. 18), earrings (Gen. xxxv. 4), and coats of divers colours (Gen. xxxvii. 3). It is probable that their tents, their clothing, their arms, and their ornaments, were alike of native workmanship.

But, however this may have been, it is quite certain that, on entering Egypt, they came into contact with a civilization of a

[1] See the Author's "Five Great Monarchies," vol. i. pp. 88-131.

very high order—a civilization which was perhaps a thousand years old, and which included within it all those branches of art and industry with which, according to the author of the Pentateuch, the Hebrews were familiar in the wilderness. If previously the processes employed by them had been rude, or coarse, or in any way defective, and the manufactured products had consequently been of poor quality, there would have been opportunity in Egypt to make rapid advance in all the various lines of industry, and to carry those which were most valued to a high degree of perfection. For it is not to be supposed that when the tribe of two or three thousand souls entered Egypt they were, all of them, at once employed in nothing but shepherding. Shepherding was no doubt their principal occupation; but those of them who had been artificers before entering Egypt would have been likely to retain their occupation. Such persons would compare their methods with those prevailing in their new country, and having the intelligence and commercial instinct which have always characterized the Hebrews, would not be slow to adopt such improvements as came under their notice. We have a right to suppose that, when the Israelites quitted Egypt, their artisans generally would be fairly on a par with those of the native Egyptians, and would be capable of producing works nearly, if not quite, equal to those which the inhabitants of the Nile valley fabricated or manufactured at the period.

What, then, are the chief classes of works, the production of which during their sojourn in the wilderness is distinctly assigned to the Israelites, and what evidence have we that works of the same or of a similar character were within the competence of Egyptian artists and manufacturers at the time of the exodus, or the period of the twentieth dynasty? The works would seem to fall under seven principal heads: 1. Metallurgy; 2. Carpentry and cabinet-making; 3. Weaving of stuffs; 4. Embroidery; 5. Preparation and dying of leather; 6. Gem-cutting and engraving; and 7. The making of confections out of spices and similar ingredients.

The metallurgy of the Egyptians was of a very advanced description. It comprised the working in gold, in silver and lead to a small extent, in copper, in iron, and in bronze. Tin appears to have been but little used except as an alloy, while zinc was wholly unknown. The Egyptians found gold in con-

siderable quantities within the limits of their own land, chiefly in veins of quartz towards the south-eastern part of their country. After digging out the quartz, they broke it up by hand into small pieces, which were then passed on to the crushing-mill, and ground to powder between two flat granite mill-stones of no great size; this work again being performed by manual labour. The quartz thus reduced to powder was washed on inclined tables, furnished with one or two cisterns, until all the earthy matter ran away, flowing down the incline with the water. The gold particles which remained were carefully collected and formed into ingots by exposure to the heat of a furnace for five days and nights in earthen crucibles, which were allowed to cool, and then broken. The ingots, having been extracted, were weighed and laid by for use. The manufacture of objects out of gold was effected by goldsmiths, who, after melting down an ingot or a portion of one, in a crucible, with the help of a blow-pipe, proceeded to work the material into shape with the forceps and tongs, and, finally, to fashion it with graving tools. Among the objects produced the commonest were solid rings of a certain size and weight, which seem to have passed current as money, vases, bowls, baskets, armlets, bracelets, anklets, necklaces, collars, ear-rings, and other ornaments of the person; cups, goblets, rhytons, and other drinking vessels. Much taste was shown in many of them. Animal forms, especially the heads of horses and ibexes, and the heads or entire bodies of serpents were represented in solid metal, or in chasings on metal; bracelets and ear-rings were often set with gems, and occasionally enamelled or inlaid with lapis lazuli and glass pastes.

In silver the objects produced were principally rings used for money, vases, bracelets, plates to be employed as ornaments of mummies, finger-rings, and statuettes, chiefly of gods and sacred animals. The fashioning of the objects was effected much in the same way as the fashioning of the objects in gold; but it is probable that the statuettes were cast. Silver objects are sometimes gilt.

The Egyptian manufacture of bronze was very extensive. Arms, implements; household vessels, such as cauldrons, bowls, ewers, jugs, buckets, basins, vases, ladles, &c.; articles of the toilet, mirrors, tweezers, razors, pins, ear-rings, armlets, bracelets; artistic objects, figures of gods, of sacred animals, and of men; tools, such as saws, chisels, hatchets, adzes, drills, and

bradawls, are usually, or at any rate frequently, of this material. The bronze arms included swords, daggers, battleaxes, maces, spearheads, arrow-heads, and coats of mail; the implements ploughshares, sickles, knives, forceps, nails, needles, harpoons, and fish-hooks. The Egyptian bronze was very variously composed; sometimes it contained as much as fourteen parts of tin and one of iron to eighty-five parts of copper—a very unusual proportion; more often the copper stood to the tin as eighty-eight to twelve; while sometimes the proportion was as high as ninety-four to six. The process of melting bronze is not shown upon the Egyptian monuments, but there can be no doubt that the metals composing it were melted and mixed together in furnaces, the glowing mass being then run into moulds, allowed to cool, and finished by the hand.

Tin was made into plates, which were inscribed with the symbolic eye, and employed to cover the incision in the flank of mummies, which had been made for the purpose of removing the entrails. It was also employed together with lead, as a solder.

Iron was occasionally used for tools, arms, and implements, but seems to have been scarce, or at any rate was not employed with anything like the same frequency as bronze. Bronze implements and weapons were found to answer every purpose satisfactorily; and being manufactured much more easily than iron was, were, on the whole, preferred to them.

The metallurgy of the Israelites, as disclosed to us by the narrative of the Pentateuch, followed closely the Egyptian lines. The metals employed were chiefly, if not solely, gold, silver, and bronze (Exod. xxv. 3; xxxv. 5). Gold was more widely employed than silver. It was used in plates to overlay wood (vers. 11, 13, &c.), for rings (ver. 12), for moulded figures (ver. 18; xxxii. 4), for bowls and their covers, for dishes and spoons (Exod. xxv. 29), for lamp-stands and lamps (vers. 31–37), and for personal ornaments, such as chains, breastplates, bells, ear-rings, bracelets, and the like (Exod. xxxii. 3; xxxv. 22, &c.). Silver was employed to overlay wood, and also for hooks and sockets (Exod. xxvii. 10, 17, &c.). The general material for vessels of all sorts and kinds was bronze. Of bronze was made the great laver for the court of the Tabernacle (Exod. xxx. 18), the pillars for the court (Exod. xxvii. 10) and their sockets, the external covering of the altar of burnt-offering (ver. 2), all the vessels of the altar

(ver. 3), the tent pegs which kept the tabernacle erect (ver. 19), and "all the vessels of the Tabernacle" (ver. 19). To fashion these objects, many of them wholly new in design and pattern, the Israelites must have had among them goldsmiths, silversmiths, and metallurgists of various kinds, and have carried with them out of Egypt the apparatus necessary for melting the metals, and running it or fashioning it into such shapes as were required. Bezaleel, it is distinctly said (Exod. xxxi. 4), was skilful "to devise cunning works, and to work in gold, and in silver, and in brass" (*i.e.*, bronze). He must have had a large number of skilled artisans under him.

The carpentry and cabinet-making of Egypt were excellent. From an exceedingly remote date the Egyptians were acquainted with the saw, and by its aid could separate into thin planks every kind of wood. These they could smooth with adzes and planes into a perfectly even surface. The high value placed by the priesthood on "arks" for the repose and conveyance of images of the gods, together with the store set by the higher orders on perfectly fashioned coffins, or mummy-cases, caused extreme care and attention to be given to this branch of industry. None of the actual arks have come down to us, but the representations on tombs and other monuments show them to have been tasteful and elegant.[1] The mummy-cases are exceedingly well made, and are generally painted with much elaboration. Smaller objects, such as sepulchral boxes, and boxes to contain articles of the toilet, are evidences of still greater skill and care, being often inlaid with gold, ivory, or porcelain, and sometimes having covers that move on a hinge. There is nothing in the account given of the Ark of the Covenant, or of the wood-work used in the Tabernacle and its surroundings, which at all transcends what the Egyptian carpenters and cabinet-makers of the time of the twentieth dynasty could have produced. The Ark itself must have borne a considerable resemblance to the arks used in their religious worship by the Egyptians. The images of the cherubim with their outstretched wings remind us of the winged figures of Ma, or "Truth," so often seen within the arks, sheltering the scarabæus or some other emblem of the deity. The staves passed through rings, by which the Ark, the table of shew-bread, and the altar of incense were to be carried, have their counterparts in the poles similarly passed through rings,

[1] See the Author's "Herodotus," vol. ii. p. 85 (edition of 1862).

which are seen in the Egyptian sculptures, attached to arks, thrones, and litters, and resting on the shoulders of the men who carry them. The pillars of the Tabernacle, with their carved "chapiters," or capitals, would have presented no difficulties to Egyptian artizans, who supported the fronts of houses, and corridors within houses, with tall thin pillars, which seem to have been of wood, and which terminate in a "lotus capital."[1]

Weaving was an art in which the Egyptians highly excelled. Though the only loom known to them was a hand-loom of the simplest and most primitive description, yet the fabrics which they produced were in all cases thoroughly good, and sometimes quite admirable. They worked in linen, in cotton, and in wool, producing satisfactory results in each material; but their favourite textile manufacture was that of linen, and it is in this branch that their fabrics are most remarkable. The fineness of some equals that of the best Indian muslin, while of others it is said, that "in touch they are comparable to silk, and in texture to our finest cambric."[2] Commonly the linen was white; but sometimes it was dyed red, and at other times the edges were coloured with indigo, either in a single line or in several parallel stripes. Patterns were occasionally inwrought during the weaving, while sometimes they were superadded by a process analagous to that which in modern times is called "printing." Gold threads were also in some cases introduced to give additional richness to the fabric, which was often as transparent as lawn and of silky softness. In the best of the linen manufactures each thread was composed of several strands, spun separately and then twisted together, the number of the strands being occasionally, it is said, as many as three hundred and sixty."[3]

Less is known concerning the cotton and the woollen fabrics of the Egyptians, which have not in many cases survived to our time; but there is no reason to believe that they fell much short of the fabrics in linen. The use of cotton was, comparatively speaking, rare; but that of woollen fabrics was common. In winter each Egyptian wore a woollen outer garment; and woollen cloths, the purpose of which is not quite clear, have been found in some of the tombs.

As with the Egyptians, so with the Israelites in the wilder-

[1] Rosellini, "Monumenti Civili." Plates, vol. ii. pl. 68, fig. 2.
[2] Wilkinson's "Ancient Egyptians," vol. iii. p. 119.
[3] Herodotus, iii. 47.

ness, linen was the chief material employed for textile fabrics The curtains of the Tabernacle were "of fine-twined linen, blue, and purple, and scarlet (Exod. xxvi. 1). Of similar material was the veil which divided between the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies (ver. 31). The hangings of the court were also of "fine-twined linen" (Exod. xxvii. 9). Linen was the only material used in the vestments of the priests (Exod. xxviii.). The outer covering of the Tabernacle was of "goat's hair," *i.e.*, of a textile fabric woven from the soft under-hair of the Syrian goat. This fabric is not found in Egypt where there was no occasion for it, since the Egyptians do not seem to have made any use of tents. The art of weaving such a cloth was probably brought by the Israelites with them into Egypt from their Syrian and Palestinian homes. It is an art well known to all the wandering tribes of Mesopotamia and Arabia, and is almost a necessity of their existence.

The Egyptians are said by Herodotus to have embroidered some of their linen fabrics with gold thread and with cotton ;[1] and woollen fabrics ornamented with embroidered patterns have been occasionally found in the tombs. It was thus quite within the competency of the Hebrews, as being familiar with the arts of Egypt, to embroider the ephod of the High Priest with gold (Exod. xxviii. 6), and the "curious girdle" with "needlework" of an artistic character (ver. 39), as well as to work (or perhaps weave) figures of cherubim into the covering (Exod. xxvi. 1) and the veil (ver. 31) of the Tabernacle.

The tanning and dyeing of leather was also known to the Egyptians. The bottoms of the chairs which have come down to our day are frequently "of tanned and dyed leather," cut into straps and intertwined or plaited together. Leathern straps are also found "crossing the shoulders and the breasts of mummies," and "stamped at the ends with the names and figures of kings of the twentieth and following dynasties." Leather was likewise employed in the construction of chariots, as well as for caps, for aprons, and for sandals. Thus the Israelites may well have carried with them out of Egypt a certain number of "rams' skins dyed red," such as they are reported to have offered (Exod. xxxv. 23) towards the construction of the Tabernacle.

Much attention had been paid in Egypt from a very early date to the cutting, polishing, and engraving of gems. The

[1] Herodotus, iii. 47.

hardest class of stones, such as the diamond, the ruby, the emerald, the sapphire, the topaz, and the chrysoberyl, seem to have defied their efforts; and, at any rate, no proof has come down to us that they had the power of cutting the gems mentioned. But they dealt freely with stones of the second degree of hardness—*e.g.* the amethyst, the garnet, the carnelian, the jasper, and with hæmatite, porphyry, lapis lazuli, green felspar, obsidian, serpentine, and steatite. These they both cut into amulets and ornaments, and also set in finger rings, armlets, bracelets, earrings, &c. They also frequently engraved these gems either with the names and titles of kings, or with their own names, or with images or emblems of deities. Among the engraved gems are the carnelian, the yellow jasper, green felspar, serpentine, basalt, porphyry, steatite, and steaschist.

Bezaleel, the chief artificer of the Tabernacle, was especially skilled in "the cutting of stones," and the "setting" of them (Exod. xxxv. 33). It is difficult to say what exact stones were employed in the ornamentation of the dress of the High Priest. The two large shoulder ornaments seem certainly to have been either onyxes or sardonyxes, both of them stones tolerably easy to engrave, and found of a sufficiently large size to answer the description of Exod. xxviii. 9–12. The fact that these stones are not among those known to have been made use of by the Egyptians is not very important, since they were common in Arabia, and may have been obtained by Moses from Arab traders, whom the presence of the children of Israel in the Sinaitic Peninsula, and their known wealth, would naturally have attracted. The gems of the priestly breast-plate (vers. 17–20) are exceedingly difficult to determine. According to the Authorised Version, they included the topaz, the emerald, the sapphire, and the diamond; but modern critics do not allow these renderings. It is most probable that the twelve gems were the sard, the chrysolite, the beryl, the carbuncle, the lapis lazuli, the onyx, the jacinth, the agate, the amethyst, the turquoise, the sardonyx, and the jasper. All these stones are fairly easy to engrave, and Arabia could furnish by far the greater number of them. The Sinaitic peninsula itself had turquoise mines, and sards, onyxes, agates, jaspers, amethysts, carbuncles, and lapis lazuli are either Arabian products or known to have been common in Egypt.

Gem-engraving had been practised in Egypt from the time of

the fourth dynasty, and was in much favour under the Pharaohs of the nineteenth. It is thought to have been effected by means of bronze tools assisted with emery powder. Bezaleel no doubt learnt the art in one of the Egyptian towns, Heliopolis, or Tanis, or Memphis, and brought with him the materials necessary for the exercise of his art when he quitted the Egyptian territory. If he was, as perhaps he was, a jeweller by trade in Egypt, he may have himself supplied the greater number of the breast-plate stones.

The Egyptians had studied the confection of spices from a very early date in connection with the embalming of human bodies. Herodotus says that, in the best kind of embalming, after taking out the intestines, they filled the cavity of the belly with a mixture of "the purest bruised myrrh, of cassia, and of every other kind of spicery except frankincense."[1] They were also very choice in the unguents which, while alive, they applied to their persons, and the toilet table was commonly covered with a great variety of jars, vases, basins, and boxes, which contained ointments, unguents, and cosmetics variously compounded. Bezaleel, who appears to have been a universal genius, added to his other kinds of knowledge an acquaintance with "the art of the apothecary" (Exod. xxx. 25, 35, xxxvii. 29), and compounded a "holy anointing oil" and an "incense of sweet spices," which were equal probably, though perhaps not superior, to the confections known in Egypt. His "holy anointing oil" was composed of one-third myrrh, one-third cassia, one-sixth cinnamon, one-sixth sweet calamus, and an uncertain quantity of oil olive. His "incense of sweet spices" contained equal quantities of frankincense, galbanum, gum storax, and onycha. The component elements were, in both cases, prescribed to him by Moses, after the command of God, but the method of preparation seems to have been left to himself, and here he would naturally fall back upon the knowledge which he had acquired in Egypt from the Egyptian "apothecaries."

Altogether, the Hebrew art of the time of Moses is clearly, in the main, based upon the art of the Egyptians. It is more contracted than that art, since many of the objects which the Egyptians most highly valued were either contemned by the Hebrews or unsuited to their life in the wilderness. As wanderers,

[1] Herodotus, ii. 86.

the Hebrews could have no architecture, properly so-called, and therefore no painting and no sculpture. The Tabernacle was not a temple but a tent, as the name implies, and followed the laws of tent-construction in general. The Hebrews had never used chariots in Egypt, and did not adopt them till the time of Solomon (1 Kings x. 26). They had no need of costly and elaborate furniture, and therefore despised the Egyptian upholstery. They do not appear to have either practised, or valued, glass-blowing, or enamelling, or the production of artificial pastes in imitation of gems, or the making of wigs, or of delicate porcelain fabrics, or of gold and silver vases for the table, or of litters, or of sarcophagi. But the arts which they employed, having been for the most part learnt in Egypt, if they did not exactly follow the Egyptian pattern, had at any rate more or less of an Egyptian character. The Ark, the mode of carrying it, its overlaying with gold, the outstretched wings of the cherubs, the preference of linen for sacred purposes, and especially for priests' garments, the embroidering with gold thread, the inweaving of patterns in textile fabrics, the setting of gems in *cloisonné* work, the use of unguents, the religious employment of incense, the fourfold arrangement of the Tabernacle into a Court, a Porch, a Holy Place, and a Holy of Holies, the sacred laver, the ornamentation with lilies, had all of them their counterparts in Egypt, and recall elements more or less essential of the Egyptian civilization. It is a strong confirmation of the historical date assigned to the Tabernacle and its appurtenances in Exodus, that there are attached to it so many Egyptian features; for at no other time in the life of the Hebrew nation would it have been natural for them to conform themselves in so many respects to "the manner of Egypt."

At the same time Hebrew art in Moses' time was far from being a mere imitation, or continuation, of the art of Egypt. In no case was it an exact reproduction of Egyptian models. The Ark of the Covenant differed considerably from any Egyptian ark. The arrangement of the wings of the cherubim differed in one striking respect from that of the images of Ma; they had both wings, Ma had one wing only, elevated. They were outside the Ark, guarding it; Ma was inside her ark, which guarded her. The chief features of the High Priest's dress were altogether peculiar. The Tabernacle, though to some extent Egyptian in arrangement, was, taken as a whole, an

entirely novel construction, for which Egypt afforded no precedent. The seven-branched candlestick was wholly unlike any known Egyptian lamp-stand. The table of shew-bread, and the pot of manna, have no Egyptian prototypes. The goats'-hair, and badger-skin (or sealskin) coverings of the Tabernacle have nothing parallel to them in Egypt. The cherubic forms were less Egyptian than Assyrian or Babylonian; the overlaying of wood with *plates* of gold instead of merely gilding was Babylonian; the use of the pomegranate ornament was Assyrian; the use of goats'-hair Syrian or Arabian. Hebrew art was thus, even in Moses' time, to a considerable extent eclectic—a characteristic which clung to it, and which is especially marked under Solomon.

CHAPTER XIV.

MOSES AS RULER.

Difficulties of the situation — Disorganization — Judges appointed by the advice of Jethro—Perversity of the Israelites—Their constant murmurings—Moses but little helped by his subordinates—Conduct of Aaron and Miriam—Relations of Moses with Joshua and with Phinehas—The true support of Moses, the Theocracy—Its nature—Mildness and unselfishness of Moses.

THE task of Moses, as sole ruler of the large tribe which he had led out of Egypt, must have been one of enormous difficulty. He had—according to the existing text—to provide for the welfare of above two millions of souls. Even if we regard the numbers of the text as corrupted, and reduce each of them by a figure, so as to substitute for the grand total of two millions and a half the comparatively moderate one of a quarter of a million, still we must regard the difficulties of the situation as extreme, and indeed as not much diminished. It was the quality, rather than the multitude of his subjects, that constituted the weight of his burden. Recently a horde of serfs, the greater part of them ignorant, uneducated, debased by their long servitude, without national spirit, without lofty aspirations, slaves mostly of their carnal appetites, fickle, childish, impulsive, they were as intractable a race, one as difficult to direct and govern, as was ever committed to the charge of an individual. They had, it must be remembered, next to no institutions. "Elders" indeed there were, heads of families, or head-men of villages, who had been allowed by the Pharaohs to exercise a certain amount of authority over their

fellow-countrymen. But the organization had been of the loosest kind, the authority vague and indefinite, its source problematical, its extent uncertain. And the circumstances of the time had been such as to weaken if not destroy it. Slaves, in the first burst of their emancipation, are apt to throw off restraints, to disown subjection to any kind of authority, and to regard it as the first of their newly-gained privileges, that they are entitled to do what is right in their own eyes. If the authority of the head-men had been still acknowledged at the moment of the exodus, in the gathering and on the march, while there was still something to be feared from Pharaoh and his host, yet after the passage of the Red Sea it would have been likely to fall into abeyance. Danger had disappeared; the open desert invited to freedom; the simplicity and regularity of the daily life seemed to render control unnecessary. When Jethro visited his brother-in-law at Rephidim, after the defeat of the Amalekites, he found the Israelites a disorganized mass, and the sole authority over them that of Moses, who was accepted as Leader, Ruler, Guide, and Judge, and was without any recognized assistants.

In this condition of affairs Jethro recognized very great inconvenience. Moses, he saw, was wearing himself out by undertaking more than any single man could perform satisfactorily (Exod. xviii. 18). He superintended the whole machinery of government. He judged causes all day long, and yet could not keep pace with the number of causes that were always arising. He was becoming exhausted, and still was not fully contenting the people. Jethro suggested to him a division of labour. He set before him the Arabian system of "rulers and judges, of elders or sheikhs, that still forms the constitution of the Arabs of the peninsula;"[1] and "Moses hearkened to the voice of his brother-in-law, and did all that he had said" (ver. 24). The plan suggested was, that Moses should "choose out of all Israel able men, and make them heads over the people, rulers of thousands, rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens" (ver. 25). Causes were to be judged in the first instance by the "rulers of tens," from whom there was to be an appeal to the "rulers of fifties," from them to the "rulers of hundreds," and then finally to the "rulers of thousands." Difficult causes, which the "rulers of thousands"

[1] Stanley, "Lectures on the Jewish Church," vol. i. p. 144.

felt themselves incompetent to decide, were to be reserved for the judgment of Moses. Moses adopted the advice, and "out of this simple arrangement sprang the gradations that we trace long afterwards in the history of the Hebrew commonwealth."[1] Moses seems to have given the nomination to the people, but to have reserved the right of appointment for himself (Deut. i. 13–15). The organization thus established was at once civil and military. The officers appointed judged causes, and also exercised a general superintendence, being "elders" in their civil, and "captains" in their military, capacity. The arrangement, on the whole, was suitable, and gave satisfaction, thus removing one of the many difficulties which beset the path of Moses as a ruler at this period.

But the chief difficulties were untouched by it. They arose from the temper of the people, from their childishness, their excitability, their want of balance, and their want of any real earnest faith in God. Every difficulty struck them as insurmountable; every trial caused them to despair, and to wish that they had never quitted Egypt. So it was in the *cul-de-sac* by the Red Sea, when they reproached Moses with having carried them forth out of the country, and declared that it would have been better for them to have continued to serve the Egyptians (Exod. xiv. 11–12). So it was again in the wilderness of Sin, when they first began to feel a difficulty with respect to food. "Would to God," they said, "that we had died by the hand of the Lord in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the flesh-pots, when we did eat bread to the full; for ye have brought us forth into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger" (Exod. xvi. 3). So it was once more at Rephidim, when for the first time there was no water. "The people murmured against Moses and said, Wherefore is this, that thou hast brought us up out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and our cattle with thirst?" (Exod. xvii. 3). Again, at Sinai, Moses has left them but for a few short weeks, when the despairing cry arises: "Up, make us a god, which shall go before us; for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him" (Exod. xxxii. 1). They have not fed on the manna for much more than a year, when a disgust takes them at the uniformity of their diet, and its want of solidity; so they "wept, and said, Who shall give us flesh to

[1] Stanley, "Lectures on the Jewish Church," vol. i. p. 144.

eat? We remember the fish, which we did eat in Egypt freely; the cucumbers, and the melons, and the leeks, and the onions, and the garlic. But now our soul is dried away; there is nothing at all, beside this manna, before our eyes" (Numb. xi. 4-6). Later, when the spies came back from searching the land, and gave an evil report, "all the congregation lifted up their voice and cried, and the people wept that night, and all the children of Israel murmured against Moses and against Aaron; and the whole congregation said unto them, Would God that we had died in the land of Egypt! or, Would God we had died in this wilderness! and wherefore hath the Lord brought us unto this land, to fall by the sword, that our wives and our children should be a prey? Were it not better for us to return to Egypt? And they said one to another, Let us make us a captain, and let us return into Egypt" (Numb. xiv. 1-4). It is needless to pursue the history. The whole history of Israel in the wilderness is one of murmurings and rebellions, whereby they repeatedly provoked God so that He would have destroyed them, if Moses had not interceded on their behalf. Never was a civil ruler more tried by the perversity of his subjects than Moses during the forty years' wanderings in the desert.

And in his troubles he had little human help. Jethro indeed gave him wise counsel and did him right good service at Rephidim (Exod. xviii. 14-23); and Hobab, probably Jethro's brother, was "as eyes" to him in the later wanderings, giving him all needful topographical information, and perhaps notifying the approach of Amalekites or other marauders (Numb. x. 29-32). But of his own people there was none that lent him any valuable aid. Aaron in the wilderness shrinks back into that subordinate position from which he only emerged for a time in consequence of Moses' undue diffidence. For leadership he shows no capacity, and when entrusted with it, he at once falls into a grievous sin, and nearly causes the destruction of the whole people through want of faith and want of a strong firm will (Exod. xxxii. 1-6, 21-24). He failed to restrain his two elder sons, Nadab and Abihu, when they sinned against God by "offering strange fire" (Lev. x. 1-3). He failed to restrain Moses at the water of Meribah (Numb. xx. 10-13). When Moses married a second time, and offended his sister thereby, since she lost the first place among the women of the tribe, Aaron not only did

not check her, but joined with her against his brother. There is no time of trouble or difficulty during the wanderings when Aaron is any support or strength to Moses, with the one exception of the fight with Amalek, when he assists in upholding Moses' hands. As for Miriam, after the Thanksgiving song on the passage of the Red Sea, she disappears from sight, and only emerges on the occasion above referred to, when she heads the opposition to Moses, ventures to "speak against him" and is punished by being smitten with leprosy, which it requires the prayer of Moses to remove (Numb. xii. 1–13). Hur, the chief of the elders, is, like Aaron, of use on one occasion only, when he joins in upholding the heavy hands of the aged prophet (Exod. xvii. 12). To only two persons in the entire host can Moses be said to have been indebted for real valuable help and assistance in his office of ruler. Joshua, the son of Nun, who was "his minister," was faithful to him from first to last. Appointed to the command against Amalek, he gained the great victory of Rephidim. He went up with his master into the mount (Exod. xxiv. 13), and waited for him, it would seem in solitude, during the weary "forty days," returning with him when he came down (Exod. xxxii. 17). He attended on Moses in all his visits to the Tabernacle (Exod. xxxiii. 11). He bore back a true report of the land and people of Canaan, and interposed to check the revolt of the people against Moses, thereby endangering his own life (Numb. xiv. 6–10). He was with Moses when he sang his last song (Deut. xxxii. 44). What part he took in the wars whereby the Trans-Jordanic region passed into the possession of Israel is uncertain; but it can scarcely be doubted that he gave Moses important aid in effecting that conquest.

The other Israelite from whom Moses derived some real help was Phinehas, his great-nephew. The only son, so far as we know, of Eleazar, Aaron's son and successor, Phinehas was, during the lifetime of his father, "the ruler or commander of the Levite guard,"[1] and a man of indomitable zeal and energy. When Israel in Shittim "began to commit whoredom with the daughters of Moab," he distinguished himself by thrusting through with a javelin two of those whose guilt was the most flagrant, without waiting to receive any direct command so to act (Numb. xxv. 6–8), thereby stopping the plague which had already begun among the people (Ps. cvi. 30). When a priest was wanted to

[1] Stanley, "Lectures on the Jewish Church," vol. i. p. 227.

accompany the expedition against the Midianites, no one seemed so fit as Phinehas for the purpose (Numb. xxxi. 1–6). Moses must have felt that he had in Phinehas a subordinate thoroughly to be depended on, one who might be trusted to undertake any task that he might be set, and to act boldly on his own responsibility at a crisis.

But though scantly aided by man in the execution of his difficult task, Moses had one unfailing resource. He could, and he did continually, throughout all his troubles, turn to God. The "theocracy" of Israel in the time of Moses was no mere nominal and unmeaning thing, but a most important reality. It was not a government by priests as opposed to kings; it was a government by God Himself as opposed to man. Moses could and did confer directly with God on all matters of high importance, and received instructions from Him how to act. It was in his power, whenever he pleased, to enter into the Tabernacle, and there converse with God face to face, as a man speaks with his friend (Exod. xxxiii. 11; Deut. xxxiv. 10). When the daughters of Zelophehad came to him, and desired an inheritance among their brethren, Moses "brought their cause before the Lord" (Numb. xxvii. 5), and received distinct directions how to decide it. And there is ample reason to believe that in so doing he was only following his usual practice. In the chief troubles—the murmurings and rebellions—there was, however, scarcely time for this formal method of consultation, and a shorter one appears to have been pursued. Moses "cried to God" from the spot where he happened to be standing at the time (Exod. xvii. 4; Numb. xiv. 5, &c.), and God interposed, and in some way or other made His will known both to him and to the people. Or God took the matter entirely into His own hand, and brought the people back to their obedience by a judgment, which proceeded suddenly and without warning from Himself (Numb. xvi. 46). What is most remarkable in the conduct of Moses as ruler is his extreme mildness and forgivingness. Twice only does he himself execute judgment, each time to vindicate God's honour—once when the idolatrous orgy is going on before the golden calf, and once again when the people have "joined themselves to Baal-Peor" (Numb. xxv. 3). On all other occasions the punishment comes straight from God, and Moses in almost every instance deprecates it, intercedes with God on behalf of the objects of it, and generally obtains a remission

He is the least exacting and the most unselfish of rulers. He requires nothing for his own glory, no crown, no throne, no title, no prostration, no honour. God gives him an honour, in the radiance of his face, and for the most part he veils it. He asks nothing for his children. Gershom and Eliezer do not emerge from the rank of ordinary Israelites, or obtain the slightest privilege or precedence because they are his sons. The priestly functions are assigned, not to them, but to the offspring of his brother, Aaron, while his own descendants scarcely obtain any mention in the later history. The leadership passes, with the full consent of Moses, to Joshua. The aspirations of Moses are after the spiritual, not after the temporal; and it is in accordance with the general tenor of his desires, that he has descended to later ages, not as the Great Sheikh, not as the Ruler or Judge, not even as the Law-giver, but as "Moses, the man of God" (Deut. xxxiii. 1; Ps. xc. title), "Moses, the servant of the Lord" (Numb. xii. 8; Deut. xxxiv. 5; Josh. i. 1, &c.), "Moses, the Prophet, whom the Lord knew face to face" (Deut. xxxiv. 10).

CHAPTER XV.

LATER YEARS OF MOSES.

Departure of the Israelites from Sinai—Route to Kadesh-Barnea—Kibroth-hattaavah and the troubles there—Hazeroth and the sin of Miriam—First arrival at Kadesh—The spies and their report—The sin of the people and the sentence on it—Israel smitten by Amalek—The thirty-eight years of penal wandering—Israel hardened and braced by them—Rebellion of Korah and its consequences—Return to Kadesh—Death of Miriam—Sin of Moses and Aaron, and death of Aaron—War with Arad—War with the Amorites—Sihon—Og—Conquest of the Trans-jordanic region—War with Midian and Moab—Part taken in it by Balaam—Moses at Abel-Shittim—He exhorts the people—His appointment of Joshua as his successor—His injunctions respecting the Book of the Law—His last words—The Song of Warning—The Song of Blessing—Extracts.

WHEN the legislation of Sinai was complete, Moses, by the Divine command, proceeded to conduct the Israelites from the plain Er-Rahah, at the foot of Ras-Sufsâfeh, to the Holy Land. The journey was directed, in the first instance, upon Kadesh-Barnea (or Kadesh), the exact location of which is uncertain. It is not intended in the present sketch of Moses' Life and Times to discuss geographical problems, much less to propound new theories in connection with any of them. It will be enough to point out the general direction of the route which Israel followed, and to indicate the most probable position of the chief resting-places. Kadesh-Barnea then was clearly in the region north-east of the wilderness of El-Tij, the tract commonly known to the Hebrews as the "Negeb" or "South country," because it bordered Palestine upon the south. All the Biblical notices tend to place it in the more eastern portion of this

region, not far from the great valley of the Arabah. To reach it Moses had to take his journey towards the north-east, and his earlier route would thus have lain along the valleys which lie outside the Tij, between it and the Elanitic Gulf or eastern arm of the Red Sea.

The first important resting-place was Kibroth-hattaavah, either Erweis-el-Ebeirig, thirty miles north-east of Sinai, or some spot not very distant from it. Here began the troubles of the journey. First, complaints broke out among the people, probably at the heat, the toil, and the privations of the march, and these God at once punished by lightning, which fell on the hinder part of the camp, and killed many persons; but ceased at the intercession of Moses (Numb. xi. 1, 2). Then, a disgust fell on the multitude at having nothing to eat but the manna day after day—no change, no flesh, no fish, no high-flavoured vegetables, no luscious fruits, no cucumbers or melons, no onions, or garlic, or leeks. The people loathed the "light food," and cried out to Moses, "Give us flesh, give us flesh, that we may eat!" Here for once the heroic leader seems to have despaired. What should he do to content the cry? Should he order the slaughter of all the flocks and herds, and thus leave the people without offerings for sacrifice, or milk for daily use, or curds, or butter, or cheese? Or should he take them to the shore of the neighbouring sea, and set them to catch, or to purchase from the Arab fishermen, all the fish with which the Elanitic Gulf abounded, and so feast them on the sort of food which they required? Or what other course should he take? In his perplexity he felt that the burden imposed on him was too great—"I am not able to bear all this people alone," he said, "because it is too heavy for me"—and he prayed that God would kill him, that he might no longer experience such wretchedness (Numb. xi. 4–15). The despairing cry elicited a double response. First the seventy elders were given a portion of Moses' spirit, and appointed to bear the burden of the people with him (ver. 17); and secondly, a prodigious flight of quails was sent, on which the people satiated their gluttonous appetite for a full month. Then punishment fell on them; they loathed the food which they had desired; it bred disease in them; the Divine anger aggravated the disease into a plague, and a heavy mortality was the consequence. The dead were buried without the camp; and in memory of man's sin and of the Divine wrath, the name

of Kibroth-hattaavah—"the Graves of Lust"—was given to the place of their sepulchre (ver. 34).

At the second resting-place, Hazeroth, a third trouble occurred. Zipporah being (as is generally supposed) dead, Moses had married again, and this time had taken to wife "an Ethiopian woman" (Numb. xii. 1). Many of the Arab tribes were descended from Cush (Gen. x. 7), and thus Moses, as he traversed the desert, might readily fall in with a tribe of Cushite Arabs, and choose a wife from among them. No law, divine or human, forbade such a marriage. Miriam, however, who, on the death of Zipporah would have become the woman of the highest dignity in the tribe, disliked the thought of descending from her exalted position, and, having persuaded Aaron to take part with her, assumed an attitude of coldness and hostility to Moses. "Miriam and Aaron spake against Moses, and said, Hath the Lord indeed spoken only by Moses? hath he not spoken also by us?" The claim set up seems to have been one of absolute equality with the true leader of the people, and its allowance would have been destructive of Moses' just authority, besides striking at the root of the Theocracy, which was practically maintained solely through the right of Moses to enter the Tabernacle, and there see and consult with God face to face. It was a crisis which called on Moses to lay aside the "meekness" that characterized him, and to boldly assert his rights. But he could not bring himself so to act. Nature was too strong for him, and apparently he would have acquiesced in the usurpation. God, however, interfered. He would not have His "faithful servant" deposed from his high station, insulted, vilified, "spoken against." Miriam, therefore, as the chief sinner, the originator of the rebellion, was suddenly stricken with leprosy in the sight of all the congregation, and stood before them "as one dead," with her flesh already "half consumed," a miserable picture of disease and impurity; loathsome to behold, and an object from which all instinctively shrank. Naturally Aaron, who was nearly as guilty, felt inexpressedly shocked, and entreated Moses to intercede for the miserable woman, whom God, on Moses' prayer, restored. The honour of Moses was thus vindicated by his Almighty Master; and the journey of the people was continued from Hazeroth through the wilderness of Paran to Kadesh (Numb. xiii. 26).

The vicinity of the Holy Land was now reached. The wan-

derings seemed to be approaching their close. Within fifteen months of their quitting Egypt, the Israelites had arrived at the south-eastern edge of the Negeb, and were probably within fifty miles of Beersheba, and within about the same distance from the southern shores of the Dead Sea. It was full summer, probably about the end of July or the beginning of August (ver. 20). Palestine might at once have been occupied, or its conquest at any rate commenced, if the people had had faith. But, on the near approach of danger, their hearts failed them, and they expressed to Moses their desire of sending men to bring a report concerning the land and its inhabitants before they ventured on invasion (Deut. i. 22). As the request seemed not wholly unreasonable, it was granted; and the "twelve spies" went up to search out the land, and bring word concerning it, what it was, whether good or bad, fat or lean; and concerning the people, whether they were strong or weak, few or many, and whether they dwelt in cities, or in tents, or in strongholds (Numb. xiii. 18–20). On the return of the "twelve," a double report was made. It was generally agreed that the land was "a good land," "a land which flowed with milk and honey." Joshua and Caleb maintained that there would be no difficulty in conquering it, while the remainder of the spies represented the difficulties as enormous and insuperable. The cities, they said, were "very great," "walled up to heaven," and the people were "men of a great stature," "taller and stronger" than the Israelites, "giants" many of them, "sons of Anak," compared with whom the Hebrews were but "as grasshoppers" (vers. 31–33). It need not surprise us that the people, already hesitating, accepted the discouraging report, and gave themselves up to despair. They had come all the long weary way from Egypt, four hundred miles at least by the route which they had followed, in the hope of possessing themselves easily of the land promised to them; and now it appeared that the possession would be hotly disputed, and that instead of effecting a rapid conquest, they would probably "fall by the sword," and their wives and children "be a prey" (Numb. xiv. 3). The prospect was too bitter. It caused them for a brief space to waver in their allegiance to Moses. The cry arose—"Let us make a captain, and let us return to Egypt." In vain did Joshua and Caleb endeavour to "still the people," and to persuade them that the Canaanites were not so greatly to be feared; that with God's blessing the land might

be conquered, and the conquest might not even be very difficult. The people would not listen, and were on the point of stoning them to death (ver. 10), when God intervened. "The glory of the Lord appeared in the tabernacle of the congregation before all the children of Israel." A death sentence was pronounced, and the execution was begun—the faithless and untruthful spies were smitten by a plague, and died suddenly (ver. 37)—the fate of the people trembled in the balance, when once more Moses interceded and prevailed. God modified the death sentence into one of simple exclusion from Palestine, and condemned the rebels to an aimless wandering for thirty-eight more years in the wilderness, until the whole guilty generation of those who had murmured and rebelled should have died out and their place have been taken by their children.

But, before the wanderings recommenced, the Israelites caused Moses a fresh trouble, and gave another specimen of their perversity. Having first sinned by too much distrust and timidity, they would set the balance straight by sinning a second time through too much boldness and self-confidence. God had commanded a backward movement by way of the "wilderness of the Red Sea" (ver. 25). In the teeth of this order, they would go up from Kadesh-Barnea to the higher region of the Negeb, and there attack the tribes in possession and seek to occupy their country. Moses warned them that the attempt would fail, and that they would be "smitten before their enemies;" but they would not listen to him. They "presumed to go up into the hill country," without the Ark of God, and without the sanction of Moses; and the result was as he had prophesied. Their old enemy, the Amalekites, and the other Canaanitish tribes of the district, resisted them and inflicted on them a severe defeat—they were "smitten" and "discomfited, even unto Hormah" (ver. 45).

The wanderings were now resumed. It is impossible to follow them. Seventeen stations are mentioned, where the ark rested for a while between the departure from Kadesh-Barnea and the return to it (Numb. xxxiii. 19–36). Most of these stations are wholly unknown, and can only be located conjecturally, either in the Tij, or in the tract between the Tij and the eastern shore of the Elanitic Gulf. The history during the period of thirty-eight years is almost a blank. Moses passes it over as a dreary time, during which no progress was made—"a period of reaction,

and contradiction, and failure."[1] It was not, however, entirely sterile of results. During the whole of it the nation was undergoing a discipline, and becoming stronger, hardier, worthier. The slave temper was passing away; the actual slaves, timid and sensual, that had come out of Egypt were dying off, their deaths divinely hastened (Numb. xiv. 32–35), and were being replaced by a generation of a firmer fibre, bred up in the bracing air of the desert, in simple habits, with healthful surroundings, and under the influence of a pure and spiritual religion. Further, it may well be that during the time they had encounters, perhaps frequent encounters, though they are not mentioned, with the native tribes of the desert — Sati, Mentu, Amalekites, Amorites, and others. The Amalekite victory, recorded in Numb. xiv. 45, must have greatly encouraged the tribes generally to offer a resistance; and we may be tolerably sure that they did not allow their best lands to be occupied year after year by an alien race, without venting on the intruders that ill-will, which is always felt by nomads against those who interfere with pastures which they consider their own. The passage of an alien tribe bent on making their way rapidly from Egypt to Palestine might have been borne; but when the tribe seemed to settle down permanently in the eastern portion of the peninsula, and to make itself a home there, which is what the Israelites did, jealousy must necessarily have been aroused, and the enforcement of proprietary rights must have led, at any rate, to occasional collisions.

A very few events are distinctly assignable to this period. The most important is the joint rebellion of the two tribes, Reuben and Levi. Korah, a Kohathite Levite, first cousin to Moses and Aaron, together with Dathan, Abiram, and On, three chiefs of Reuben, persuaded their fellow-tribesmen to rise up in revolt against Moses, and to question the very basis of his authority. The Reubenite chiefs, no doubt, intended to assert the right of their tribe, as the eldest born of Israel, to hold the reins of civil government, while Korah, and the Levites who abetted him, disputed the claim of Aaron and his sons to the special privileges of the priesthood. An insolent demeanour was assumed; disrespectful language was used; the commands of Moses were disobeyed and openly set at nought; and a condition of things was brought about, which, if unchecked, would have resulted in

[1] Stanley, "Lectures on the Jewish Church," vol. i. p. 180.

absolute anarchy and confusion. Moses, under the circumstances, did not attempt to punish the rebels himself, but made appeal to Jehovah. Korah and his company should take censers and put incense in them, and approach near to the Tabernacle to perform the priestly duty of offering it, and they should see whether God would accept their offering, and so endorse their claim, or whether He would reject it. Dathan and Abiram were summoned to attend and see what would happen; but they refused and remained at their tent doors, with their adherents. Hereupon there fell upon the rebels a double punishment. Moses having first warned the congregation to remove from the vicinity of the Reubenite leaders' tents, the earth suddenly gaped and swallowed up the ringleaders and those about them, while at the same time a fire burst forth from the Tabernacle of the congregation, and utterly consumed the ambitious Levites who were gathered in front of it to offer their incense (Numb. xvi. 1–35). Their censers were collected by the order of Moses, and made into "broad plates for a covering of the altar," as a memorial of the transaction, and a solemn warning to future generations, that they might not "perish in the gainsaying of Korah" (Jude, ver. 13).

The partial rebellion of these two tribes was followed by a general outburst of discontent, which brought once more into jeopardy the very existence of the Hebrew nation. "On the morrow *all the congregation of the children of Israel* murmured against Moses and against Aaron, saying, Ye have killed the people of the Lord" (Numb. xvi. 41). The Divine anger was necessarily provoked by the senseless and blasphemous charge, which attributed to Moses and Aaron as a crime what God had done by way of just punishment; and the complete destruction of the entire congregation would have followed, had not Moses again promptly interposed. Moses ordered an atonement to be made; and it was made by Aaron as quickly as was possible; but the plague had already gone forth, and the "murmuring" had cost fourteen thousand seven hundred lives (Numb. xvi. 49).

After thirty-eight years of weary wanderings, during which the people spread themselves widely in search of pasture for their flocks, and the tabernacle moved from place to place among them, the pillar of the cloud once more brought the ark to Kadesh, and there was a general collection of the congregation to that locality (Numb. xx. 1). During the stay here Miriam

died. It was the first loss from among his own kith and kin, so far as we know, that Moses had suffered, the first break in the small family circle which had come with him out of Egypt. Miriam must have been an aged woman, a hundred and thirty years old or more. Her sisterly duties had been faithfully discharged, except on one occasion (Numb. xii. 1); and Moses must have severely felt her loss. It is among the chief griefs of old age, that the friends of our youth drop off one by one, and leave us more and more companionless, until at last we are wholly solitary. Moses, according to Josephus, mourned for Miriam during the space of thirty days, and honoured her with a costly public funeral, in which all the people took part.[1] Her grave, according to him, was on the summit of a hill called Sin, which must have been in the near vicinity of Kadesh, though later tradition places it not far from Petra.[2]

Another death followed shortly that of Miriam. During the stay at Kadesh, which was of many months' duration, the springs of the neighbourhood had proved insufficient for the collected nation, and fresh murmurings having arisen, Moses and Aaron had been commanded to give the people to drink by "speaking to the rock before their eyes," which would then gush out with abundant water, sufficient both for the congregation, and for their cattle. In their method of carrying out this command, Moses and Aaron alike offended God. Instead of giving Him the glory, and "sanctifying Him in the eyes of the people of Israel," they took the credit of the action to themselves, as though it was done by their own power and will. "Hear now," they said, "ye rebels, must *we* fetch you water out of this rock?" And then, instead of "speaking to the rock" in God's name, Moses angrily "smote it twice," as though to compel it to give up its treasures. For this misconduct, this "unadvised speaking" (Ps. cvi. 33) and rash action, a sentence was at once pronounced upon both—"Because ye believed Me not to sanctify me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore ye shall not bring this congregation into the land which I have given them" (Numb. xx. 12); and, a little later, the further announcement was made with respect to Aaron—"Aaron shall be gathered unto his people; he shall not enter into the land which I have given unto the children of Israel, because ye re-

[1] Josephus, "Ant. Jud.," iv. 4, § 6.
[2] Jerome, "Onomasticon," ad voc. Cades-Barne.

belied against My word at the waters of Meribah" (Numb. xx. 24). The Israelites had reached Mount Hor at this time—probably Jebel Madurah,[1] and there, "in the top of the mount," having first transferred his priestly garments to his son Eleazar in the sight of all the people, Aaron died—the first, and perhaps the saintliest of the long line of high priests, passed away, forbidden to enter the Promised Land, but allowed to see its outermost skirts, and to die with his eye resting upon those northern hills, behind which lay Hebron, and Jebus, and the Dead Sea, and the rich Jordan valley, and the land flowing with milk and honey, the land of wheat and barley, and vines, and fig-trees, and pomegranates—the land whose stones were iron, and out of whose hills men might dig brass (Deut. viii. 8, 9). Aaron, like Miriam, was mourned for thirty days (Numb. xx. 29).

The Great Leader was now left alone—"the youngest, the greatest, and the only remaining child of the family of Amram."[2] He was alone, and he must have known that his career drew towards its close; but his spirit was undaunted. Physically and mentally he retained his vigour—"his eye was not dim, neither his natural force abated" (Deut. xxxiv. 7). It is in the final year of his life that he renews those military glories which had gilded his early manhood, and becomes the successful commander in three great wars, and the conqueror of Eastern Palestine. As the forty years of enforced wandering (Numb. xiv. 34) approached their term, the march on Palestine had to be resumed, and various hostile nations had to be encountered one after another. The first struggle seems to have been with Arad, a Canaanite monarch, whose country was probably the tract about the modern Tel Arad, which is between Beersheba and the southern end of the Dead Sea. If Mount Hor is Jebel Madurah, and if Israel had advanced thither in expectation of being permitted to pass through the Edomite territory, we can understand that Arad would be alarmed, and would imagine that his country was about to be invaded. He therefore, it would seem, took the offensive (Numb. xxi. 1), attacked Israel, and at first gained some advantage, but was shortly afterwards delivered into their hand, his land ravaged, and his cities utterly destroyed" (ver. 3).

The next war was with the Amorites. Forbidden by the

[1] See Dr. Trumbull's "Kadesh-Barnea," pp. 127–139.

[2] Stanley, "Lectures on the Jewish Church," vol. i. p. 185.

Edomites to traverse their country, the Hebrews retired southward, and avoiding Edomite territory, marched from Mount Hor to Ezion-Geber, at the head of the Gulf of Akabah, and rounding the granite range of Mount Seir, passed by the Wady Ithan along its eastern flank, till they reached a tract of country which the Amorites had recently taken from the people of Moab. The tract was that between the Arnon and the Jabbok, to the east of the Red Sea and of the Lower Jordan, a highland region of extreme fertility, consisting of "a wide tableland tossed about in wild confusion of undulating downs, clothed with rich grass throughout,"[1] and in spring waving with great sheets of wheat and barley, in summer and autumn bringing to perfection vast quantities of grapes. Here, encamped upon the Arnon (Numb. xxi. 13), Israel sent messengers to Sihon, king of the Amorites, asking a passage through his country, which was refused. War followed. Sihon gathered together his forces at Jahaz, a strong city not far north of the Arnon, "on the confines of the rich pastures of Moab and the desert whence the Israelites emerged," and offered battle to the Israelites, which they were not slow to accept. Israel began the attack. Charging the Amorites with great force and courage, they almost immediately produced among them a panic terror, which threw the whole host into disorder. Sihon was seized with alarm, and regretted that he had not stood on the defensive behind the strong walls of his numerous towns. The Israelites, seeing their advantage, pressed on with vigour; "their slingers and their archers, afterwards so renowned, now first showed their skill."[2] Sihon fell; the army broke up and fled, pursued by their active foe, who allowed them no respite. Some of the fugitives broke off from the main body, and made for the nearest cities, but were mostly shot down ere they could reach them. Those who kept together, retreating hastily under a hot sun, suffered greatly from thirst, and at last coming upon a watercourse, descended into it to drink, and, like the Athenians in their flight from Syracuse, were slaughtered in the bed of the stream. The army was not only defeated but annihilated. There was no more resistance. The entire country between the Arnon and the Jabbok submitted to the conquerors; the cities opened their gates, "Heshbon, and its daughters," Jahaz, and Dibon, and Medeba, and Elealeh, and

[1] Stanley, "Sinai and Palestine," p. 314.

[2] Stanley, "Lectures on the Jewish Church," vol. i. p. 213.

Baal-meon, and Kir-hareseth, and Horonaim (Numb. xxi. 24, 25). No wonder that a song of triumph went up from the triumphant host—

> "We have shot at them: Heshbon is perished;
> We have laid them waste, even unto Nophah;
> With fire: even unto Medeba."[1]

After the defeat of Sihon, and the conquest of the entire tract between the Arnon and the Jabbok, a war followed with Og, who had been Sihon's ally, and who was, like him, an Amorite (Deut. iii. 8). Og's territory was the far-spreading and delightful region, known as Bashan, which reached from the Jabbok upon the south to the flanks of Hermon upon the north, and extended eastward so as to include the Ledja, or district of Argob, which is a stony tract, rising suddenly from the fertile plain—formed of a sort of "ocean of basaltic rocks and boulders, tossed about in the wildest confusion, and intermingled with fissures and crevices in every direction."[2] Bashan, apart from Argob, is a rich and well-wooded country, abounding with forests of oak and other trees, and producing abundant wheat, barley, and olives. It is the most picturesque portion of the Holy Land. "The traveller rides up and down deep concealed dells, sometimes by a track meandering along the banks of a brook, with a dense fringe of oleanders shading it from the sun, and preventing summer evaporation, while they waste their perfume on the desert air without a human inhabitant near. Lovely knolls and dells open out at every turn, gently rising to the wooded plateau above. Then we rise to higher ground, and ride through noble forests of oak: then for a mile or two through luxuriant green corn; or perhaps through a rich forest of scattered olive-trees, left untended and uncared for, with, perhaps, patches of corn in the open glades."[3]

Og, according to Josephus,[4] was coming to the aid of Sihon when he heard of his defeat and death. If so, he must have retreated in some alarm to his stony citadel of Argob; for it seems to have been there that he made his stand. Moses had been instructed by God to invade Bashan, and promised complete success (Numb. xxi. 34). In reliance on this promise he marched

[1] See the Septuagint Version of Numb. xxi. 30.
[2] Porter, in Smith's "Dictionary of the Bible," vol. i. p. 104.
[3] Tristram, "Bible Places," p. 322.
[4] Josephus, "Ant. Jud." iv. 5, § 3.

into the heart of the country, and found Og with his army posted at Edrei, in a very advantageous position. Edrei occupies a rocky promontory, which projects from the south-west corner of the Ledja into the plain. It is without water and without access, excepting over rocks and through defiles almost impracticable. Many of the old houses still remain—they are of great strength, low, massive, and gloomy. Moses, however, persevered. Though Og was by repute "of the sons of the giants," and of a stature rarely attained by man, while his subjects were probably also to a large extent of the primitive gigantic race, he yet proceeded to the attack. How he overcame the obstacles, we do not know, but the result of his assault was a complete victory; the greater part of the Amorite army perished; Og and his sons perished with them; Edrei was taken; and the whole kingdom shortly overrun. There were within its limits sixty cities, all of them "fenced with high walls, gates, and bars (Deut. iii. 5), beside unwalled towns a great many." These Moses took and "utterly destroyed;" at the same time, by Divine command, exterminating the inhabitants (ver. 6).

The Trans-Jordanic region was thus conquered, with the exception of the Moabite territory south of the Arnon, and extending thence along the shores of the Dead Sea to the Lower Jordan valley, of the Ammonite country further to the east, and of some scattered settlements of the Midianites. Whether the original intention of Moses was, or was not, to occupy this country, is not apparent, but, at any rate, he was induced to agree to its occupation by the representations of the Reubenites and Gadites, who pointed out that it was especially suited to them on account of their wealth in cattle. Having pledged them solemnly to take full part in the conquest of Western Canaan, notwithstanding their eastern location, he assigned the district to them, joining with them, however, as needed for the full occupation of the district, one-half of the tribe of Manasseh (Numb. xxxii. 1–40).

The last war of Moses was with the Midianites, or, perhaps it should be said, with the Midianites, supported by the Moabites. The relations of the Israelites with the Moabites had from first to last been strained. Moses had received an express command from God not to invade their territory, or contend with them in battle, since they were "children of Lot," and thus a kindred race to Israel (Deut. ii. 9). He had therefore skirted their country, as he had the country of the Edomites, leaving it on his left hand

as he marched to the banks of the Arnon, on his way to invade the territory of Sihon, recently Moabite, but, at the time of his invasion, Amorite. Moab had seen his advance with displeasure; and the king of Moab at the time, Balak the son of Zippor, had sent into Mesopotamia, and hired a soothsayer, on whom he placed great reliance, hoping to induce him to lay the people of Israel under a curse, and intending in that case to attack them and "drive them out of the land" (Numb. xxii. 5, 6). But the soothsayer, Balaam the son of Beor, proved intractable. He was a man of that strangely mixed character, which from time to time passes across the stage of history, "combining the purest form of religious belief with a standard of action immeasurably below it;"[1] anxious for worldly advancement, but unable to bring himself to overstep manifestly the restraints of law and conscience; always repining and seeking to reconcile his private interest with the rule of right; self-deceived, and gradually led on to the commission of grievous sins, from which his better nature would have shrunk, had he viewed them in their true light. Solicited by two embassies, he consents after a time to draw near to the temptation, and then he proceeds to coquet with it, to dally with it, to endeavour as it were to circumvent the Deity, and to find a way of doing what the monarch who has sent for him desires without directly giving the lie to his internal spiritual impulses and Divine enlightenment. In this he fails. "The irresistible force of the prophetic impulse overpowers the baser spirit of the individual man."[2] The Divine message forces its way, and is delivered whether he will or no. Hired to curse Israel, he is compelled to bless them altogether—to "lift up his voice" and cry—"How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, and thy tabernacles, O Israel! As the valleys are they spread forth, as gardens by the river's side, as the trees of lign aloes which the Lord hath planted, as cedars beside the waters. Water shall flow from his buckets, and his seed shall be in many waters; and his king shall be higher than Agag, and his kingdom shall be exalted. God brought him forth out of Egypt; he hath as it were the strength of a wild bull: he shall eat up the nations that are his enemies; he shall break their bones in pieces; and pierce them through with his arrows. He couched, he lay down as a lion; (he lay down) as

[1] Stanley "Lectures on the Jewish Church," vol. i. p. 191.
[2] Ibid., p. 196.

a lioness; who shall stir him up? Blessed be he that blesseth thee, and cursed be he that curseth thee!" (Numb. xxiv. 5–9).

Reluctantly, Balak gave up the idea of himself attacking the host of Israel with his army, and descended to a lower and baser form of hostility. By the advice of Balaam (Numb. xxxi. 16) he drew the Israelites into sin, tempted them to join in the Moabite and Midianite idolatries, and then to engage in those licentious orgies, with which the idolatries of the East were always so intimately connected. Israel fell into the snare; and the result was that terrible plague which cost the lives of twenty-four thousand of the people, whereto the zeal of Phineas put a stop.[1] It was to avenge this successful plot that the last war of Moses was undertaken. The Divine command still protected Moab; but Midian, which had been Moab's tool, received the chastisement that both had deserved, and suffered a fearful retribution. The war had the character of a sacred war. Of every tribe throughout all the tribes of Israel one thousand warriors were taken, perhaps by lot, and to this small representative army was committed the task of chastising the myriads of Midian. Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the high priest, who had already shown his zeal against licentiousness, was appointed to accompany, and probably to direct, the expedition; the ark and "vessels of the sanctuary" (Numb. xxi. 6), went with him; and the sacred trumpets were blown. The Midianite army was commanded by five chiefs, Evi, and Rekem, and Zur, and Hur, and Reba, who are all of them given the title of "king," but who were probably heads of tribes, like Oreb, and Zeb, and Zebah, and Zalmunna (Judges viii. 3–5). Moab perhaps sent a contingent under Balaam. At any rate, that arch-plotter was present, and took part in the fight, which terminated in Midian's entire discomfiture, in the complete destruction of the army, and in the slaughter of the five chiefs. The great prophet of the East was involved in their fate. "Balaam, the son of Beor, the soothsayer, did the children of Israel slay with the sword among the rest of their slain" (Joshua xiii. 22). An enormous quantity of spoil was taken—675,000 sheep, 72,000 cows and oxen, 61,000 asses, and female captives to the number of 32,000—besides a great store of gold in the shape of ankle-chains and bracelets, of signet rings, earrings, and armlets (vers. 32–35,

[1] See above, page 171.

and 50). By Divine command the male population was exterminated.

The active work of Moses was now accomplished. Eastern Palestine was conquered, except the Moabite and Ammonite portions, which were reserved for the children of "just Lot;" and the time had come for the victorious nation to pass from the eastern to the western region, and claim the whole wide sweep of its inheritance. But Moses was not to go over Jordan, and knew that he was not to go over. He was conscious that his end approached; and having brought the people to the very banks of Jordan, and disposed them along its course, in the rich valley under the eastern hills, from Beth-Jeshimoth near the shore of the Dead Sea to Abel-Shittim, "the acacia meadow," several miles higher up the stream, he prepared to bring his life to a close with calmness, courage, and dignity, and to commit the task of completing his work to another.

His first care was to give injunctions to the people, and to impress upon them, in the strongest possible way, the importance of their cleaving to God, and observing all the ordinances of the law delivered to them through him, if they would hope to obtain the Divine blessing, and to avoid the terrible punishments in store for the disobedient. This he did by the series of discourses which are recorded in the first thirty chapters of Deuteronomy, wherein appeal is made to every motive that commonly exercises a constraining force upon men; and by an alternation of threats and promises, of appeals to gratitude, and to reason, and to self-interest, and to the innate sense of right and wrong, the nation is urged, persuaded, exhorted, wrought upon, to refuse the evil and choose the good, to renounce idolatry, impurity, and wickedness of all kinds, and to walk in the way of the Lord, to fear Him, and to keep His commandments. The sum is this—"See, I have set before thee this day life and good, death and evil; in that I command thee this day to love the Lord thy God, to walk in His ways, and to keep His commandments, and His statutes, and His judgments, that thou mayest live and multiply, and that the Lord thy God may bless thee in the land whither thou goest in to possess it. But if thine heart turn away, and if thou wilt not hear, but shalt be drawn away, and worship other gods, and serve them; I denounce unto you this day that ye shall surely perish; ye shall not prolong your days upon the land, whither thou passest over

Jordan to go in and possess it. I call heaven and earth to witness against you this day, that I have set before thee life and death, the blessing and the curse; therefore choose life, that thou mayest live, thou and thy seed: to love the Lord thy God, and to obey His voice, and to cleave unto Him; for He is thy life, and the length of thy days: that thou mayest dwell in the land which the Lord sware unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give them" (Deut. xxx. 15–20).

The next care of Moses was with respect to his successor Joshua had been previously, not obscurely, designated for the post. Moses had put up a request to God, saying: "Let the Lord, the God of the spirits of all flesh, appoint a man over the congregation, which may go out before them, and which may come in before them: that the congregation of the Lord be not as sheep which have no shepherd (Numb. xxviii. 16, 17); and God had replied: "Take thee Joshua, the son of Nun, a man in whom is the spirit: and set him before Eleazar the priest, and before all the congregation, and give him a charge in their sight. And thou shalt put of thine honour upon him, that all the congregation of the children of Israel may obey. And he shall stand before Eleazar the priest, who shalt enquire for him by the judgment of the Urim before the Lord: at his word shall they go out, and at his word shall they come in, both he and all the children of Israel with him" (vers. 18–21). And Moses had done according to the commandment of God: he had taken Joshua and set him before Eleazar the priest, and before all the congregation; and had laid his hands on him, and given him a charge, as the Lord had said (vers. 22, 23).

It would seem, however, that now, in the immediate prospect of death, he gave Joshua a second charge. "Moses called unto Joshua, and said unto him in the sight of all Israel, Be strong and of a good courage: for thou shalt go with this people into the land which the Lord hath sworn unto their fathers to give them; and *thou shalt cause them to inherit it.* And the Lord, He it is that doth go before thee; He will be with thee, He will not fail thee, neither forsake thee; fear not, neither be dismayed" (Deut. xxxi. 7, 8). This was the formal delivery into the hands of Joshua of the office of leader of the people. It was immediately followed by a solemn confirmation of the act by God Himself, who summoned both Moses and Joshua to present themselves before Him in the Tabernacle of the Con

gregation, and there ratified what Moses had done by Himself giving Joshua his commission in the words: "Be strong and of a good courage: for *thou shalt bring the children of Israel into the land* which I sware unto them: and *I will be with thee*" (vers. 23).

3 Moses' third care was concerning the Book of the Law. Moses had written the Book of the Law at various intervals in the course of the wanderings. Either on parchment, which the Hebrew artificers may have had the skill to prepare from the skins of slain beasts, or on papyrus, which he may have brought with him out of Egypt, he had noted down the several laws delivered to him by God during the forty years of his ministry, and had collected them into a "book" (*sepher*), which was thenceforth to be the rule of their life to the people. Of this "Book" he had hitherto been the custodian; but, now that he was on the point of departing, some other custodian, or custodians, must be found for it. It might have been expected that he would transfer the charge, with the other duties of his office, to Joshua; but either this course did not approve itself to him, or he was Divinely admonished to act otherwise. Joshua was a soldier, not a prophet or a priest. It was fitting that the Law, the rule of life for all, the directory for the entire ritual and service which it was the office of the priests to perform, should be deposited with the priestly class, but with some security that they should not tamper with it, nor alter it, in their own interest, or to suit their own ideas of what was right and proper. To this end Moses provided a double security. He made the priests the custodians of the Book in conjunction with "the elders of Israel" (ver. 9); and he required that his autograph should be "put by the side of the Ark of the Covenant" (ver. 26); and that from it should be read in the ears of the whole people, once every seven years, in the Feast of the Tabernacles, either the whole Law, or at any rate the main precepts of it (vers. 10–13). No better precautions could have been taken for preserving the text in its integrity, and ensuring the transmission of the rules of conduct, which he had been commissioned to lay down, unaltered and unimpaired, from generation to generation.

Still, when all this was done, there seemed to be some "last words" needed. The pastor does not readily quit his flock without prolonged exhortation. The founder of a people or a state, if he has notice of his approaching end, still more

desires to imprint his instructions and warnings on the minds of the people whom he is leaving. Moses, deeply anxious for his nation and impressed strongly with the feeling that after his death they would fall away from God and "utterly corrupt themselves," composed in the few days that remained to him, and recited in the ears of the congregation, two splendid psalms or "songs"—one a "song of warning," addressed to the people collectively, and the other a "song of blessing," addressed (in the main) to the twelve tribes severally, "correspondent and supplementary to each other,"[1] setting before the people "Life" and "Death"—the glorious future which awaited them if they would be faithful to God and set themselves earnestly to the accomplishment of their national mission, and the terrible judgments that would fall upon them if they, as he anticipated, should apostatize, despite God's mercies to them, and provoke the vengeance with which God was bound to visit such apostasy. The poems are too long to be inserted here in their entirety; but a specimen may be given from each, which will sufficiently indicate their style and general character:

"Jeshurun waxed fat, and kicked—
Thou art waxen fat, thou art grown thick, thou art become sleek:
Then he forsook the God which made him,
And lightly esteemed the Rock of his salvation.
They moved Him to jealousy with strange gods,
With abominations provoked they Him to anger;
They sacrificed unto demons, which were no gods,
To gods whom before they knew not;
To new gods that came newly up—
Gods, whom your fathers feared not.
Of the Rock that begat thee thou art unmindful,
And hast forgotten the God that gave thee birth;
And when the Lord saw it, He abhorred them,
For the provoking of His sons and of His daughters;
And He said, I will hide My face from them—
I will see what their end shall be;
For they are a very froward generation,
Children in whom there is no faith.
They have moved Me to jealousy with that which is not God;
They have provoked Me to anger with their vanities;
And I will move them to jealousy with those that are not a people,
I will provoke them to anger with a foolish nation.
For a fire is kindled in mine anger,

[1] "Speaker's Commentary," vol. i. part ii. p. 920.

And burneth unto the lowest hell,
And devoureth the earth, with her increase,
And setteth on fire the foundations of the mountains.
I will heap mischiefs upon them;
I will spend Mine arrows upon them:
They shall be wasted with hunger,
And devoured with burning heat,
And with bitter destruction;
And the teeth of beasts will I send upon them,
With the poison of crawling things of the dust.
Without shall the sword bereave,
And in the chambers terror;
It shall destroy both young man and maid,
The suckling with the man of grey hairs.
I said, I would scatter them afar;
I would make the remembrance of them to cease from among men;
Were it not that I feared the provocation of the enemy,
Lest their adversaries should misunderstand—
Lest they should say, Our hand is exalted,
And the Lord hath not done all this."[1]

The "Song of Blessing" has a prologue and an epilogue of a general character, the "Blessing" proper being the following:

Let Reuben live, and not die;
And let not his men be few.
And this is the blessing of Judah—He said,
Hear, Lord, the voice of Judah,
And bring him unto his people;
Let his hands be sufficient for him,
And be Thou a help to him from his enemies.
And of Levi he said—
Thy Thummim and thy Urim are with thy godly one,
Whom thou didst prove at Massah,
With whom thou strovest at the waters of Meribah;
Who said of his father and mother, I have not seen him;
Neither did he acknowledge his brethren;
Nor knew he his own children:
For they have observed thy word,
And they have kept thy covenant.
They shall teach Jacob thy judgments,
And Israel shall they teach thy law:
They shall put incense before thee,
And whole burnt offerings upon thine altar.
Bless Thou, Lord, his substance;

[1] Deut. xxxii. 15–27.

And accept the work of his hands:
Smite through the loins of them that rise against him,
And of them that hate him, that they rise not again.

Of Benjamin he said—

The beloved of the Lord shall dwell in safety by Him;
And He (*i.e.*, the Lord) shall cover him all the day long;
And he (*i.e.*, Benjamin) shall dwell between His shoulders.

And of Joseph he said—

Blessed of the Lord be his land,
For the precious things of heaven, for the dew,
And for the deep that coucheth beneath,
And for the precious things of the fruits of the sun,
And for the precious things of the growth of the moons,
And for the chief things of the ancient mountains,
And for the precious things of the lasting hills,
And for the precious things of the earth and its fulness,
And for the good will of him that dwelt in the bush:
Let the blessing come upon the head of Joseph,
And on the crown of the head of him that was separate from his brethren.
His firstling bullock is his glory;
And his horns are the horns of the wild ox;
With them shall he push all the people to the ends of the earth:
And they are the ten thousands of Ephraim,
And they are the thousands of Manasseh.

And of Zebulun he said:—

Rejoice, Zebulun, in thy going out;
And Issachar, rejoice in thy tents.
They shall call the people unto the mountain;
There shall they offer sacrifices of righteousness;
For they shall suck of the abundance of the seas,
And of treasures hid in the sand.

And of Gad he said:—

Blessed be he that enlargeth Gad:
He dwelleth as a lioness,
And teareth the arm, yea, the crown of the head.
And he selected the first part for himself,
Because for him was reserved the leader's portion:
And he came, together with the heads of the people;
He executed the justice of the Lord,
And his judgments, together with Israel.

And of Dan he said:—

Dan is a lion's whelp,
That leapeth forth from Bashan.

And of Naphtali he said:—

O Naphtali, satisfied with favour,
And full with the blessing of the Lord,
Possess thou the sea and the south.

And of Asher he said :—

Blessed be Asher with children ;
Let him be favoured among his brethren ;
And let him dip his foot in oil.
Thy bars shall be iron and brass ;
And as thy days, so shall thy strength be."[1]

[1] Deut. xxxiii. 6-25.

CHAPTER XVI.

MOSES' DEATH.

The ascent of Pisgah—The view from it—Hebrew legend of the circumstances of Moses' death—Actual circumstances unknown—Place of sepulture unknown—Chief characteristics of Moses—His faithful service of God—His "meekness"—His trust in God—His unselfishness—Conclusion.

Two things only now remained for Moses to do—to satisfy his soul with the fullest sight of the Promised Land that was possible for him under the circumstances, and to die. He might not go over Jordan, but he might feast his eyes, and comfort his heart, with a long, rapt, earnest gaze upon that goodly land to which he had brought his people, and which he knew to be their sure inheritance. He might "lift up his eyes," and look "westward, and northward, and southward, and eastward," and behold "the good land that was beyond Jordan, that goodly mountain, and Lebanon" (Deut. iii. 25, 27). So much had been granted him, and he had been bidden to ascend into the top of Pisgah, and thence contemplate the wondrous, the unequalled, prospect. It is to be remembered that though aged a hundred and twenty years, he was in no way infirm; "his eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated" (Deut. xxxiv. 7). He was able, therefore, without any extreme fatigue or exhaustion, to mount from the low plain of Jordan, where the host lay encamped, from ridge to ridge, and from terrace to terrace, up the rocky range of Moab, to the "high places" dedicated to Baal on the top of the rocks, to the bare hill close above it—the cultivated field of the watchmen (Zophim) on the top of Pisgah—to the peak where

stood "the sanctuary of Peor, that looketh toward the waste." On and on, the aged prophet toiled upward. Scripture shuts up the scene into the fewest, simplest words (Deut. xxxiv. 1–4); but Josephus to some extent expands it, whether following tradition, or drawing from the stores of his own imagination, who shall say? According to the Jewish historian, "He withdrew from the camp amid the tears of the people, the women beating their breasts, and the children giving way to uncontrolled weeping. At a certain point of the ascent, he made a sign to the weeping multitude to advance no further, and pursued his way, taking with him only the elders, the high priest, Eleazar, and the general, Joshua. At the top of the mountain he dismissed the elders, and was proceeding to embrace Eleazar and Joshua, when a cloud suddenly covered him, and he vanished from their sight in a deep ravine or gully."[1]

But first, he had gazed intently on the fair scene stretched out before his view. "Beneath him lay the tents of Israel ready for the march; and, over against them, distinctly visible in its grove of palm trees, the stately Jericho, key of the Land of Promise. Beyond was spread out the whole range of the mountains of Palestine, in its fourfold masses—"all Gilead," with Hermon and Lebanon in the east and north; the hills of Galilee, overhanging the Lake of Gennesareth; the wide opening where lay the plain of Esdraelon, the future battle-field of the nations; the rounded summits of Ebal and Gerizim; immediately in front of him the hills of Judea, and amidst them, seen distinctly through the rents in their rocky walls, Bethlehem on its narrow ridge, and the invincible fortress of Jebus. To him, so far as we know, the charm of that view—pronounced by the few modern travellers that have seen it to be unequalled of its kind—lay in the assurance that this was the land promised to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, and to their seed, the inheritance—with all its varied features of rock, and pasture, and forest, and desert—for the sake of which he had borne so many years of toil and danger, in the midst of which the fortunes of his people would be unfolded worthily of that great beginning. To us, as we place ourselves by his side, the view swells into colossal proportions, as we think how the proud city of palm trees is to fall before the hosts of Israel; how the spear of Joshua is to be planted on height after height

[1] Josephus, "Ant. Jud." iv. 8, § 48.

of those hostile mountains; what series of events, wonderful beyond any that had been witnessed in Egypt or in Sinai, would in after ages be enacted on the narrow crest of Bethlehem, in the deep basin of the Galilean lake, beneath the walls of Jebus, which is Jerusalem."[1]

It has been said that the sight afforded to Moses of "all the land," "Gilead, and Dan, and all Naphtali, and the land of Ephraim, and Manasseh, and all the land of Judah unto the utmost sea, and the south, and the plain of the valley of Jericho, the city of palm trees, unto Zoar" (Deut. xxxiv. 1-3), was "supernatural, obtained perhaps, through an extraordinary enhancement of the dying lawgiver's power of vision."[2] But there is no need of this supposition. From the highest peak of Nebo, which seems to have borne the name of Pisgah, the natural eye, unhelped, would have ranged over the sylvan scenes of Gilead and Bashan, over the Ghor or Jordan valley from end to end, over the Dead Sea and the hill-country of the south beyond, over the Judæan upland, and over the mountains of Ephraim and Manasseh, would have had glimpses of the fertile valleys which nestle among the Palestinian hills, and have caught a sight of ancient cities crowning many a rocky eminence. Naphtali, if not seen, would have been suggested by the snowy peak of Hermon towering aloft in the far northern sky; and even "the utmost sea," though beyond bodily ken, being shut out by the Judæan hills, would have been felt as present beyond them at no great distance towards the west. The whole Land of Promise was before Moses, and in the clear atmosphere of that southern sky he would see its features with a distinctness of which we northern islanders, who dwell in fogs, can scarcely form a conception; he would see and comprehend how fair and "goodly" was the tract, how fitted to teem with corn, and wine, and honey, and oil olive, and fig trees, and pomegranates, where his people might be sure to "eat bread without scarceness," and have "no lack of anything" (Deut. viii. 8, 9).

A Hebrew legend tells the tale of the actual death of Moses as follows:

"The supreme angels were commanded to take away the soul of Moses; but they tarried through fear. Among

[1] Stanley, "Lectures on the Jewish Church," vol. i. p. 197.

[2] "Speaker's Commentary," vol. i. part ii. p. 927.

them was Zagzagel, or Zangziel, the special teacher of Moses, who said—'O Lord, I was the instructor of Moses, how can I take away the soul of my disciple?' Then the Angel of Death was called forth, who, with the eagerness of the Destroyer, drew his sword and approached Moses. But he saw inscribed on his staff the Ineffable Name of the Almighty; he saw fiery sparks issuing from his lips, and a wondrous lustre shining forth from his countenance. For Moses shone like the sun, and had the appearance of an angel of the heavenly host. Then was the Angel of Death stricken with terror. And Moses, turning his eye upon the angel, asked of him—'Who sendeth thee unto me?' Whereto the Angel of Death replied—'He that hath created the world, and that hath delivered into my hands all those who come into the world.' Then Moses spake—'I was gifted with the greatest power. I was born with all the signs of a true child of Israel, and was endowed with speech at my birth. My mother received a recompense even for the milk wherewith she nursed me. From the days of my childhood I was made a prophet, being destined to receive the Law; I wrested the crown from the head of Pharaoh. At the age of eighty I wrought signs and miracles; six hundred thousand Israelites I led out of Egypt. For them I cleft the sea, making twelve paths. I sweetened the waters. I cut from the rock the tables of stone, and took them up into the firmament of heaven. Face to face I spake with the Lord of the universe. I prevailed over the powers that sought to rival me in the supreme regions. It was I that received the Law. Under the dictation of Him who inspired me, I wrote the 613 commandments, and by my teaching enforced them. I overcame the giants, who after the Flood had maintained their predominance. I determined the motions of the sun and moon in their orbits. I have been the mightiest of men. Thou, rebellious angel, for whom there is no peace, begone!'

"And the Angel of Death fled. Then called out the mysterious voice—'Contend not; thy life lasteth only a short moment.'

"Again was the Angel of Death summoned to take away the soul of Moses. But he said—'I may deepen Gehenna into a lower depth; but over the son of Amram can I not prevail. Before him I cannot stand. His face beameth like that of a

seraph in the heavenly chariots. His countenance shines with Divine radiance.' And the Almighty addressed the Angel of Death, and said—'Thou rebellious angel, thou wert formed out of the fire of Gehenna. Unto the fire of Gehenna thou shalt return. Eagerly thou wentest forth; but when thou didst behold the greatness of that man (*i.e.*, Moses), thou didst shrink back with dismay. Nevertheless, his soul shall be brought home.'

"Once more did the Angel of Death with drawn sword approach Moses, who held in his hand the Divine staff, inscribed with the Ineffable Name. With that staff did Moses touch the Angel of Death; and with a rebuke he put him to flight. The lustre of his countenance had not departed from Moses, when for the last time there rang out the mysterious voice, exclaiming—'The end of thy time hath come.' Moses stood up in prayer and said—"Thou, Lord of the Universe, who wast revealed unto me in the burning bush, remember that Thou didst carry me up into Thy heaven, where I abode forty days and forty nights—have mercy upon me, and hand me not over into the power of the Angel of Death.'

"His prayer was granted. Moses stood there as a seraph, clad with heavenly majesty; and He who ruleth in the highest heavens Himself received the soul of Moses, who acknowledged the benign and compassionate rule of the Creator. Moses resigned himself to that merciful rule.

"Thus he followed the guidance of the Almighty. And three angels, Michael, Zagzagel, and Gabriel, came to meet him, smoothing his couch for him to lie down on; and they placed themselves at his right side, and his left side, and at the foot of his couch. Then, by the heavenly command, he clasped his hands and closed his eyes. And the Almighty called his soul, saying unto it—'My daughter, one hundred and twenty years were appointed for thee to abide in the body of this righteous man. Tarry no longer there. Thou hast arrived at thy destination. And thou shalt be placed with me by the Throne of My Glory, where Seraphim and Ophanim, where angels and cherubim are enthroned.' And the soul said—'Well was it for me to dwell within this righteous man. Angels themselves became corruptible, but this man, Moses, who was but flesh and blood, was the purest among the pure, ever since the time when Thou didst reveal Thyself unto him in the midst of the burning bush.'

"Then the Almighty with a Divine kiss removed the soul of

Moses. 'Moses, the servant of the Lord, died by the mouth of the Lord' (Deut. xxxiv. 5). There was mourning in heaven and mourning on earth, and sorrow prevailed everywhere on account of Moses; for he had proclaimed the Lord's righteousness, and the Divine justice among the people. He had proclaimed the knowledge of the Lord in the heavens above, and likewise on the earth beneath; and he had established that testimony, whereby he transcended every other prophet in Israel. Therefore he received the high praise, which crowns the conclusion of the Divine Law."

Such is the account of the legend. The actual manner of Moses' death must remain for ever a mystery. No eye saw it. None knew the exact moment of it. In silence and solitude, at the top of Pisgah, alone with God, the great lawgiver, prophet, leader, passed away—passed to the rest which he had so well earned, not smitten by any painful disease, nor worn out by gradual decay—but, still in the full possession of his powers, still with none of his natural force abated, he sank to rest—he "was not, for God took him" (Gen. v. 24). The soul fled; the body remained, and was buried in some strange and mysterious way—not by Eleazar, not by Joshua—in a ravine of the mountain: but exactly where, no man knew. "HE buried him in a valley of the land of Moab, over against Beth-peor; but no man knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day" (Deut. xxxiv. 6). "The children of Israel wept for Moses in the plains of Moab thirty days" (ver. 8); but he had no funeral rites, no obsequies, no monument; and hence there could be no after growth of loving pilgrimages, no superstitious reverence of a holy spot, no local commemorative ceremonies. The grave on Mount Nebo was, as is the grave of Golgotha, shrouded in thick darkness, to after ages an unknown locality.

As Abraham receives in Scripture, as his special designation, the title of "the Friend of God" (2 Chron. xx. 7; Isa. xli. 8; Jas. ii. 23), so Moses bears the title of "the Servant of the Lord" (Exod. xiv. 31; Numb. xii. 7; Deut. xxxiv. 5; Josh. i. 1; Heb. iii. 5). The special quality which this epithet marks is his unswerving faithfulness—that absolutely unshaken fidelity to God which characterized him throughout his entire career, alike at Heliopolis, where he worshipped God daily outside the walls of the city, turning towards the sun-rising; in Midian, where he proclaimed by the name of his son that "God was his

help" (Exod. xviii. 4); in his dealings with Pharaoh, wherein from first to last he followed exactly all the directions that God gave him; and in his leadership of the people, which was little less than a constant pleading to them of God's claims, God's will to bless, God's power to punish. Moses was "faithful to God *in all his house*" (Heb. iii. 5); *i.e.*, in the entire government and administration which he exercised for forty years over Israel, God's "house" or "household." He was ever witnessing to them for God. "Stand still and see the salvation of the Lord" (Exod. xiv. 13)—"the Lord shall fight for you" (Exod. xiv. 14)—"at even ye shall know that the Lord hath brought you out" (Exod. xvi. 6)—"This is the bread which the Lord hath given you to eat" (Exod. xvi. 15)—"Wherefore do ye tempt the Lord?" (Exod. xvii. 2)—"Wherefore now do ye transgress the commandment of the Lord?" (Numb. xiv. 41)—"The Lord your God, which goeth before you, He shall fight for you" (Deut. i. 30)—"The Lord thy God is a consuming fire, even a jealous God" (Deut. iv. 24)—"The Lord thy God is a merciful God, He will not forsake thee" (Deut. iv. 31)—"Thou shalt fear the Lord thy God; Him shalt thou name, and to Him shalt thou cleave, and swear by His Name" (Deut. x. 20), &c. Even in the one defection of Moses (Numb. xx. 10-13), at the waters of Meribah, there was no conscious unfaithfulness. Moses was wearied out—he was impatient—the perverseness of the people had angered him—"Hear now, ye rebels," he exclaimed; "must we fetch you water out of this rock?" He did not mean to take the honour to himself; but for the moment God was not in his thoughts, and he neglected to "sanctify Him in the eyes of the children of Israel" (ver. 12), a sin of omission for which God punished him.

A second characteristic, and the one which is most widely recognized, though perhaps not always quite rightly understood, is his "meekness." The temperament of Moses was not placid or tame. He was quickly and violently provoked by ill-doing, when others were the object of it, and warmly resented injuries done either to man or to God. Hence his rash act in Egypt, when he "slew the Egyptian" (Exod. ii. 12); hence his chivalrous deliverance of the daughters of Reuel from the rude Midianite shepherds (Exod. ii. 17-19); hence his hasty breaking of the Tables of the Law on his first descent from Sinai (Exod. xxxii. 19); hence his command to the Levites to take

their swords and "slay every man his brother" (Exod. xxxii. 27); hence his wrath against Korah and his company, who wished to degrade Aaron (Numb. xvi. 5–15); hence his conduct at "the waters of strife." It was only in his own case, when he was individually concerned, that Moses was "meek," that he did not resent wrong-doing, or inflict punishment on the wrong-doer. He interceded for the people and obtained their pardon, when they rejected his authority (Numb. xiv. 4–20); he besought God to heal Miriam, when her sin against him had caused her to be smitten with leprosy (Numb. xii. 1–13). He was mild in his rebuke of Aaron, when Aaron had grievously failed in the trust that he had reposed in him (Exod. xxxii. 21). Once only was he angered at a slight offered to himself, when Pharaoh bade him "see his face no more" (Exod. x. 28; xi. 8); and we may feel sure that his anger then was less on his own account than on account of the insult offered to God in the person of His messenger.

Into the catalogue of Old Testament saints set forth as examples to Christians by the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews, Moses enters by reason of his faith. "By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter" (Heb. xi. 24). "By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king, for he endured *as seeing Him that is invisible*" (ver. 27). The faith of Moses almost never wavers. Whether Pharaoh threatens his life (Exod. x. 28), or the Red Sea and the Egyptian host shut him in (Exod. xiv. 9), or the people are "almost ready to stone him" (Exod. xvii. 4), or Amalek meets him in the way and seeks to destroy both him and his people (Deut. xxv. 17, 18), or for the people's sin he is condemned to eight and thirty years of aimless wandering in the wilderness (Numb. xiv. 28–35), or his tribe rises up and seeks to shake off his rule (Numb. xvi. 1–32), or his nearest and dearest forsake him (Numb xii. 1–11), or the entire nation proposes to put itself under another leader (Numb xiv. 4), or Sihon blocks his entrance into Palestine (Numb. xxi. 23), or Balak "seeks enchantments" against him (Numb. xxiv. 1), or Og the giant comes out to battle against him at Edrei (Numb. xxi. 33), Moses remains firm, unmoved—he has "put his trust in God, and does not fear what flesh can do unto him;" he is certain that God will interpose, that He will not suffer His purpose to be frustrated, that He will come down to vindicate His

own honour, that nothing will be able to stand against Him. He sets before his face always "Him that is invisible;" in every difficulty he flies to Him, entreats Him, beseeches Him, implores His mercy, His protection, His gracious favour, His forgiveness. True, his faith is sustained in a miraculous way, so that the same strain is not put on it as on that of other men; for he sees God, or at least sees "his similitude" (Numb. xii. 8), and converses with him face to face "as a man speaketh unto his friend" (Exod. xxxiii. 11). But still his faith is something marvellous, something almost without a parallel. It takes him to God at every moment; it sustains him under every trial and disappointment; in a lifetime of a hundred and twenty years it fails him perhaps three or four times; otherwise it is a constant support and stay. To the last he has the eternal God for his refuge, and feels underneath him the everlasting arms (Deut. xxxiii. 27). Not even Abraham, "the father of the faithful," is more a man of faith than he.

But of all his qualities, of all his many excellences, the most remarkable, the most characteristic, is his unselfishness. His own interest, his own advancement, is never his motive. He does not seek greatness; greatness is thrust upon him. In Egypt, he abdicates his princely rank, and throws himself into the almost hopeless cause of his oppressed brethren; in Midian, he is quite content to be a shepherd, and aims at no higher condition; when the time for his call comes, all his efforts are directed towards escaping compliance with the call; in the early portion of his ministry, he pushes Aaron to the front, and remains himself in the background; at Sinai he declines to be put in the position of Abraham, and to become the father of all the faithful; later on he prays that his name may be blotted out from God's book rather than God's favour and guidance should be withdrawn from the people. Forced to the front himself when troubles thicken, he assumes no state, takes no titles of honour, claims no position for his sons, either in his own lifetime or afterwards; assigns the succession to a stranger. An ambitious man, a self-seeking man, would, in the position which Moses occupied, have established a dynasty. Moses, under Divine guidance, gave his tribe a certain pre-eminence, but asked nothing for his descendants.

But "the meek inherit the earth" (Matt. v. 5). There are lights which, though put under a bushel, cannot be hid. Moses,

though scantly regarded during his lifetime, was to his people after his death "the man of God" (Deut. xxxiii. 1)—"the servant of the Lord" (Deut. xxxiv. 5)—the prophet like to whom none ever after arose (ver. 10)—the "chosen one" of God (Ps. cvi. 23)—"Moses, beloved of God and men, whose memorial is blessed" (Ecclus. xlv. 1)—"in intelligence surpassing all men" (Josephus, "Ant. Jud." iv. 8, § 49)—"as a general equalled by few" (ibid.)—"great in all respects" (Philo, ii. p. 280)—"king, lawgiver, high-priest, prophet in one" (ibid. p. 179), "in all that he did or said a pattern to all men" (ibid. pp. 383-4). Nor was his memory confined to the single people which under his auspices became a great nation. Manetho the Egyptian knew of him, and spoke of him as the founder of the Jewish polity, and the author of the Jewish laws;[1] the Greeks became acquainted with his name about the time of Herodotus,[2] and unanimously attributed to him the peculiar customs which marked out from all others the Jewish people. Historians of Egypt with one voice proclaimed that it was he who led the Jews from Egypt to the Holy Land.[3] From Greece his fame passed to Rome, where attention was first drawn to him by Cornelius Alexander in the time of Sulla, and where he soon became known as "the Jewish legislator," and attracted the notice of Apollonius Molo, Trogus Pompeius, Strabo, Thallus the freedman of Tiberius, Tacitus, Juvenal, Longinus, and others. Longinus called him "no common man;"[4] Numenius, the Pythagorean philosopher, said that he was "very powerful with God through prayer."[5] Hecatæus of Abdera praised his courage and practical wisdom.[6] But his true praise and his true glory is, that, bred up from infancy under circumstances that might well have attracted him to idolatry and to laxity of living, he turned from them by a strong effort of the will, and chose the better part, chose to

[1] See the Fragments of Manetho in the "Fragm. Hist. Græc." of C. Müller, vol. ii. p. 580, Fr. 54.

[2] Justin Martyr, "Cohort ad Gent.," [illegible]; Cyril Alex. "Contra Julianum," vol. i. p. 15, D.

[3] Manetho, *l.s.c.*; Chæremon ap. Joseph., "Contr. Apion," i. 32; Ptol. Mendes. ap. Tatian., "Orat. adv. Gent." § 37.

[4] Longinus, "De sublimitate," § 9.

[5] Numenius ap. Euseb., "Præp. Ev." ix. 8.

[6] Hecat. Abder. in C. Müller's "Fragm. Hist. Græc." vol. ii. p. [illegible] Fr. 13.

abide by the One God, "the God of his father, the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob" (Exod. iii. 6), chose to cling to his brethren, and "rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season" (Heb. xi. 25). In this "great decision" all was involved; for this God exalted him; for this God "recompensed" him (ver. 26); not, however, with the reward that men commonly look for and hope for—power and honour and riches, a soft easy life of worldly enjoyment, a position of dignity and repose among the great of the earth—but with the far more fitting and appropriate reward of a long life of exertion and toil in His service—a life of hardship, of scant food, frequent fatigue, constant trouble, bereavement, disappointment—but a life cheered by continual close communion with Him, and by the sense of an important task accomplished, of a nation emancipated, instructed, guided, trained, fitted for the work before it, ready at last after forty years of preparation to enter into that inheritance, to which he had been commissioned to conduct it, and fitted, amid whatever lapses and shortcomings, to bear a witness for God in the future, to hold aloft the torch of truth, to testify to the nations on behalf of the One God, the One Pure, Perfect, Spirit, Self-existent, All-Holy —"The Lord, The Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty" (Exod. xxxiv. 6, 7).

THE END.

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